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Old Kensington.

CHAPTER XIX

KENSINGTON PALACE CHAPEL.



MEANWHILE Dolly, who has been looking for Rhoda in vain, stands alone in the pew, listening to the opening exhortation, and, at the same time, wondering alongside of it, as she used to do when she and Rhoda were little girls at Paris long ago. Her thoughts run somewhat in this fashion:—"Inner life," thinks Dolly. "What is inner life? George says he knows. John Morgan makes it all into the day's work and being tired. Aunt Sarah says it is repentance. Robert won't even listen to me when I speak of it. Have I got it? What am I?" Dolly wonders if she is sailing straight off to

heaven at that moment in the big cushioned pew, or if the ground will open and swallow it up one day, like the tents of Korah and Abiram. This is what she is at that instant—so she thinks at least: Some white-washed walls, a light through a big window; John Morgan's voice echoing in an odd melancholy way, and her own two hands lying on the cushion before her. Nothing more: she can go no farther at that minute towards "the eternal fact upon which man may front the destinies and the immensities."

So Dolly at the outset of life, at the beginning of the longest five years of her life, stands in the strangers' great pew in Kensington Palace Chapel—a young Pharisee, perhaps, but an honest one, speculating upon the future, making broad her phylacteries; and with these, strange flashes of self-realization that came to puzzle her all her life long—standing opposite the great prayer-books, with all the faded golden stamps of lions and unicorns. It was to please her brother George that Dolly had come to church this Saint's Day. What wouldn't she have done to please him? Through all his curious excursions of feeling he expected her always to follow, and Dolly tried to follow as she was expected.

"For our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of life," the reader ran on. Dolly was ready enough to be grateful for all these mercies, only she thought that out of doors, in the gardens, she would have felt as grateful as she did now; and she again wondered why it was better to tender thanks in a mahogany box with red stuffings, out of a book, instead of out of her heart, in the open air. "Can this be because I have no inner life?" thought Dolly, with her vacant eyes fixed on the clergyman. A bird's shadow flitted across the sun-gleam on the floor. Dolly looked up, and saw the branch of the tree through the great window, and the blue depths shining, dazzling, and dominant. Then the girl pushed her hand across her eyes, and tried to forget other thoughts as she stood reading out of the big brown prayer-book. Dolly's gloves had fallen over the side of the pew, and were lying in the oak-matted passage-place, at the feet of a little country cookmaid from one of the kitchens of the Palace, who alternately stared down at the grey gloves and up at the young lady. The little cook, whose mistress was away, had wandered in to the sound of the bell, and sat there with her rosy cheeks like some russet apple that had fallen by chance into a faded reliquary belonging to a sumptuous shrine. Was it because it was Saturday, Dolly wondered, that she could not bring her heart to the altar?—that the little chapel did not seem to her much more than an allegory? Are royal chapels only echoes and allegories? Do people go there to pray real prayers, to long passionately, with beating hearts? Have dried-up tears ever fallen upon the big pages of the old books with their curling *t's* and florid *s's*? Books in whose pages King George the Third still rules over a shadowy realm, Queen Charlotte heads the Royal Family!

Dolly had started away from her vague excursions when the Epistle ended. "Of the tribe of Zabulon twelve thousand, of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand." . . . It seemed to Dolly but a part of the state and the ceremony that oppressed her. As the armies passed before her, she seemed to hear the chaunt of the multitude, to follow the endless processions of the elect filing past with the seals on their triumphant brows, the white robes and palms in their extended hands!

But listen, what is this? John Morgan thundered out the long lists of the tribes; but his voice softened as he came to the well-loved gospel of

the day :—"Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom ; blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted ; blessed are the merciful, the pure, the peacemakers. . . ."

"Are these the real tribes upon earth for whom the blessing is kept ? Am I of the tribe of the merciful, of the peacemakers ?" Dolly asked herself again. "How can I make peace ?—there is no one angry," thought the girl ; "and I'm sure no one has ever done me any harm to be forgiven, except—except Mr. Raban, when he spoke to Aunt Sarah so cruelly about George. Ought I to forgive that ?" thought the sister, and yet she wished she had not spoken so unkindly. . . .

When the end came there was a rustle. The old ladies got up off their knees, the curtains stirred in the big Dugald Dalgetty pew : Dolly was to meet John Morgan in the outer room, but the old clerk gave her a message to say that Mr. Morgan had gone to the chaplain's, and would meet her in the clock court of the Palace.

"There was a gentleman asking for him just a minute by," said the old clerk.

So Dolly, instead of filing off with the rest of the congregation, went sweeping along the dark vaulted passages with the sunlight at either end—a grey maiden floating in the shade.

Dolly's dress was demure enough : for though she liked bright colours, by some odd scruples she denied herself the tints she liked. If she sometimes wore a rose or a blue ribbon, it was Lady Sarah who bought them, and who had learnt of late to like roses and blue ribbons by proxy. Otherwise, she let Dolly come, go, dress as she liked best ; and so the girl bought herself cheap grey gowns and economical brown petticoats : luckily she could not paint her pretty cheeks brown, nor her bright hair grey. Sometimes Rhoda had proposed that they should dress in black with frill caps and crosses, but this Aunt Sarah peremptorily refused to permit. Lady Sarah was a clever woman, with a horror of attitudinizing, and some want of artistic feeling. The poor people whom she visited, Rhoda herself, soon discovered the futility of any of the little performances they sometimes attempted for Lady Sarah's benefit.

Dolly stepped out from the dark passage into the Palace courtyard, with its dim rows of windows, its sentinel, its brasses shining, the old doorways standing at prim intervals with knobs and iron bells, which may be pulled to-day, but which seem to echo a hundred years ago, as they ring across the Dutch court. The little cookmaid was peeping out of her kitchen-door, and gave a kind little smile. Some one else was waiting, pacing up and down that quiet place, where footsteps can be heard echoing in the stillness. But as Dolly advanced, she discovered that it was not John Morgan, as she imagined. The gentleman, who had reached the end of his walk, now turned, came towards her, looking absently to the right and the left. It was the very last person in the whole world she had expected or wished to see. It was Frank Raban, with his pale face, who

stopped short when he saw her. They had not met since that day when he had talked so strangely.

If Dolly looked as if she was a little sorry to see Mr. Raban, Mr. Raban also looked as if he had rather not have met Dolly. He gave a glance round, but there was no way by which he could avoid her, unless he was prepared, like harlequin in the pantomime, to take a summersault and disappear through one of the many windows. There was no help for it. They both came forward.

"How do you do, Miss Vanborough?" said Raban, gravely, holding out his hand, and thinking of the last time they had met.

"How do you do?" said Dolly, coldly, just giving him her fingers. Then melting a little, as people do who have been over-stiff—"Have you seen George lately? how is he?" said Dolly, more forgivingly.

Raban looked surprised. "He is quite well . . . Don't you—has he not——" he interrupted himself, and then he went on, looking a little confused: "I am only in town for an hour or two. I have been calling at John Morgan's, and they sent me here to find him. Shall I find Lady Sarah at home this afternoon?"

Dolly flushed up. In a moment all her coldness was gone. Something in his manner made her suspect that all was not well. "It is something more about George?" she said, frightened, and she fixed her two circling eyes upon the man. Why was he for ever coming—evil messenger of ill tidings? She guessed it, she felt it, she seemed to have some second sight as regards Raban. She almost hated him. A minute ago she had thought she could forgive him.

Dolly's cheeks flushed in vain, her eyes flashed harmless lightning.

"Yes, it is about your brother," said the young man, looking away. "I have at last been able to make that arrangement to help him, as Lady Sarah wished. It has taken me some time and some trouble;" and without another word he turned and walked away towards the passage.

I think this was the first time Dolly had ever been snubbed in all her life, except by George, and that did not count.

A furtive, quick, yet hesitating footstep flutters after Frank. "Mr. Raban," says Miss Vanborough.

He stopped.

"I did not mean to pain you," blushing up (she was very indignant still, and half-inclined to cry. But she was in the wrong, and bent upon apology.) "I beg your pardon," she said, in a lofty, condescending, half-ashamed, half-indignant sort of way; and she held out her hand.

Frank Raban did not refuse the outstretched hand; he took it in his, and held it tight for an instant, with a grip of which he was scarcely aware, and then he dropped it. "You don't know," he said, with some emotion,— "I hope you will never know, what it is to have done another great wrong. I cannot forget what you said to me that last evening we

met ; but you must learn more charity, and believe that even those who have failed once may mean to do right another time."

How little she guessed that, as he spoke, he was thinking what a madness had been his ; wondering what infatuation had made him, even for one instant, dream they could ever be anything to one another.

As the two made it up, after a fashion, a bell tinkled through the court, a door opened, and John Morgan came running down some worn steps, twirling his umbrella like a mill.

"Here I am, Dolly. Why, Raban !" he shouts, "where do you come from ? Dr. Thompson is better—he kept me discussing the church-rates. I couldn't get away. You see, where the proportion of Dissenters

— Will you have an arm ?"

"No, thank you," said Dolly.

"—where the proportion is one-fiftieth of the population—"

The curate, always enthusiastic, seized Raban's arm, and plunged with him into the very depths of Dr. Thompson's argument. Dolly lingered behind for a minute, and came after them, along the passage again and out by a different way into an old avenue which leads from the Palace stables, and by a garden enclosed in high brick walls. It used to be Lady Henley's garden, and Dolly sometimes walked there. Now she only skirted the wall. The sun was casting long shadows, the mists were gone, a sort of sweet balmy ripeness was in the air, as they came out upon the green. The windows of the old guard-house were twinkling ; some soldiers were lounging on the grass. Some members of the congregation were opening the wicket-gates of one of the old houses that stood round about in those days, modest dependencies of the Palace, quaint-roofed, with slanting bricks and tiles, and narrow panes, from whence autumnal avenues could be descried.

There is a side-door leading from Palace Green to Kensington Gardens. Within the door stands an old stone summer-house, which is generally brimming over with little children, who for many years past have sat swinging their legs upon the seat.

As Dolly passed the gate she heard a shout, and out of the summer-house darted a little ragged procession, with tatters flying—Mikey and his sister, who had spied their victim, and now pursued her with triumphant cries.

"Tsus !—hi, Mikey !—Miss Vamper !" (so they called her).

"Give us a 'napenny,'" says Mikey. "Father's got no work, mother was buried on Toosdy ! We's so 'ungry."

"Why, Betty," said Dolly, stopping short, and greatly shocked, "is this true ?"

"Ess," says little Betty, grinning, and running back through the wicket.

"What did you have for dinner yesterday ?" says Dolly, incredulous, and pursuing Betty towards the summer-house.

"Please, miss, mother give us some bread-and-drippin'," says Mikey, with a caper. "I mean father did. We's so . . ."

"You mean that you have been telling me a wicked story," interrupted

Dolly. "I am *very* angry, Mikey. I *never* forgive deception. I shall give you no apples—nothing. I" She stopped short; her voice suddenly faltered. She stood quite still watching two people, who came advancing down the avenue that led to the little door, arm-in-arm, and so absorbed in each other, that for a minute they did not see that she was standing in the way. It was a chance. If it had not happened then, it would have happened at some other time and place.

Rhoda had waited until the service was over, and in so doing she had come upon the last person whom she wished to see just then. There stood Dolly by the summer-house, with a pale face, confronting her, with the little ragged crew about her knees. Mikey, looking up, thought that for once "Miss Vamper" was in the tantrums.

Rhoda started back instinctively, meeting two blank wondering eyes, and would have pulled George away, but it was too late.

"Nonsense," said George; and he came forward, and then they all were quite silent for a minute, George a little in advance, Rhoda lingering still.

"What does this mean?" said Dolly, coldly, speaking at last.

"What does it mean!" George burst out. "Don't you see us? don't you guess? It is good news, isn't it?—Dolly, she loves me. Have you not guessed it all along—ever since—months ago?"

He was half-distracted, half-excited, half-laughing. His eyes were dim with moisture. Any one might see him. What did he care for the ragged children, the people passing by—those silent crowds that flit through our lives! He came up to Dolly.

"You will be tender to her, won't you, and help her, for my sake, and you will be our friend, Dolly? We had not meant to tell you yet; but you wish us joy, won't you, dear?"

"Tender to her? Help her? What help could she want?" thought Dolly, looking at Rhoda, who stood silent still, but who made a little dumb movement of entreaty. "Was it George who was asking her to befriend him? Was it George, who had mistrusted her all this long time, and kept her in ignorance . . .?"

"Why don't you answer? Why do you look like that? Do you wonder that I or that anybody else should love her?" he went on eagerly.

"What do you want me to do?" Dolly asked. "I cannot understand it."

Her voice sounded hard and constrained: she was hurt and bewildered.

George was bitterly disappointed. Her coldness shocked him. Could it be possible that Rhoda was right and Dolly hard and unfeeling?

Poor Dolly! A bitter wave of feeling seemed suddenly to rise from her heart and choke her as she stood there. So! there was an understanding between them? Did he come to see Rhoda in secret, while she was counting the days till they should meet? Was it only by chance that she was to learn their engagement? They had been stopping up the way; as they moved a little aside to let the people pass, Rhoda timidly

laid one hand on Dolly's arm,—“ Won't you forgive me ? won't you keep our secret ? ” she said.

“ Why should there be any secret ? ” cried Dolly, haughtily. “ How could I keep one from Aunt Sarah ? I am not used to such manœuvrings.”

Rhoda began to cry. George, exasperated by Dolly's manner, burst out with “ Tell her, then ! Tell them all—tell them everything ! Tell them of my debts ! Part us ! ” he said. “ You will make your profit by it, no doubt, and Rhoda, poor child, will be sacrificed.” He felt he was wrong, but this made him only the more bitter. He turned away from Dolly, and pulled Rhoda's hand through his arm.

“ I will take care of you, darling,” he said.

“ George ! George ! ” from poor Dolly, sick and chilled.

“ Dolly ! ” cried another voice from without the gate. It was John Morgan's. He had missed her, and was retracing his steps to find her.

Poor weak-minded Dolly ! now brought to the trial and found wanting : how could she withstand those she loved ? All her life long it was so with her. As George turned away from her, her heart went after him.

“ Oh, George ! don't look at me so. My profit ! You have made it impossible for me to speak,” she faltered, as she moved away to meet the curate and Frank Raban.

“ What is the matter ? are you ill ? ” said John Morgan, meeting Dorothea in the doorway. “ Why did you wait behind ? ”

“ Mikey detained me. I am quite well, thank you,” said Dolly, slowly, with a changed face.

Raban gave her a curious look. He had seen some one disappear into the summer-house, and he thought he recognized the stumpy figure.

John Morgan noticed nothing ; he walked on, talking of the serious aspect things were taking in the East—of Doctor Thompson's gout—of the church-rates. Frank Raban looked at Dolly once or twice, and slackened his steps to hers. They left her at the corner of her lane.

CHAPTER XX.

RHODA TO DOLLY.

DOLLY heard the luncheon-bell ringing as she walked slowly homewards. It seemed to her as if she had been hearing a story which had been told her before, with words that she remembered now, though she had listened once without attaching any meaning to them. Now she seemed to awake and understand it all—a hundred little things, unnoticed at the time, crowded back into her mind and seemed to lead up to this moment. Dolly suddenly remembered Rhoda's odd knowledge of George's doings, her blushes, his constant comings of late : she remembered everything, even to the gloves lying by the piano. The girl was bitterly hurt, wounded, impatient. Love had never entered into her calculations, except as a joke or a far-away impossibility. It was no such very terrible secret

after all that a young man and a young woman should have taken a fancy to each other; but Dolly, whose faults were the faults of inexperience and youthful dominion and confidence, blamed passionately as she would have sympathized. Then in a breath she blamed herself.

How often it happens that people meaning well, as Dolly did, undoubtedly slide into some wrong groove from the overbalance of some one or other quality. Dolly cared too much and not too little, and that was what made her so harsh to George, and then, as if to atone for her harshness, too yielding to his wish—to Rhoda's wish working by so powerful a lever.

Lady Sarah came home late for luncheon, and went up to her room soon after. Dolly gave Frank Raban's message. She herself stopped at home all day expecting George, but no George came, not even Rhoda, whom she both longed and hated to see again. Every one seemed changed to Dolly; she felt as if she was wandering lost in the familiar rooms, as if George and her aunt and Rhoda were all different people since the morning.

"Why are you looking at me, child?" said Lady Sarah, suddenly. Dolly had been wistfully scanning the familiar lines of the well-known face; there was now a secret between them, thought the girl.

Mr. Raban came in the afternoon as he had announced, and Dolly, going into the oak room, found him there, standing in the shadow, with a bundle of papers under his arm, and looking more like a lawyer's clerk than a friend who had been working hard in their service.

Dolly was leaving the room again, when her aunt called her back for a minute.

"Did George tell you anything of his difficulties the last time he was in town?" Lady Sarah asked from her chimney-corner. "When was it you saw him, Dolly?"

She was nervously tying some papers together that slipped out of her hands and fell upon the floor. Poor Dolly turned away, and there they lay; Dolly did not attempt to pick them up. There was a minute's silence.

Dolly flushed crimson. "I—I don't—I can't tell you," she said, confusedly.

She saw Frank Raban's look of surprise as she turned away. What did she care what he thought of her? What was it to him if she chose to tell a lie and he guessed it? Oh, George! cruel boy! what had he asked?

Frank Raban wondered at Dolly's silence. Since she wished to keep a secret, he did not choose to interfere; but he blamed her for that, as for most other things; and yet the more he blamed her the more her face haunted him. Those girl's eyes, with their grey lights and clouds; that sweet face, that looked so stern and yet so tender too. When he was away from her he loved her; when he was with her he accused her.

It was a long, endless day. Miss Moineaux was welcome at tea-time, with her flannel bindings and fluttering gossip. It seemed like a little bit of commonplace, familiar every-day coming in. Dolly went to the door

with her when she left them, and saw black trees swaying, winds chasing across the dreary sky, light clouds sailing by. The winds rose that night, beating about the house. A chimney-pot fell crashing to the ground; elm-branches broke off from the trees and were scattered along the parks. Dolly, in her little room, lay listening to the sobs and moans without, to the fierce hands beating and struggling with her window. She fell into a sleep, in which it seemed to her that she was railing and raving at George again: she awoke with a start to find that it was the wind. She dreamt the history of the day over and over. She dreamt of Raban, and somehow he always looked at her reproachfully. She awoke very early in the morning, long before it was time to get up, with penitent, loving words on her lips. Had she been harsh to George? Jealous—was she jealous? Dolly scorned to be jealous, she told herself. It was her hatred of wrong, her sense of justice, that had made her heart so bitter. Poor Dolly had yet to discover how far she fell short of her own ideal. My poor little heroine was as yet on the eve of her long and lonely expedition in life. There might be arid places waiting for her, dreary passes, but there were also cool waters and green pastures along the road. Nor had she yet journeyed from their shade, and from the sound of her companions' voices and the shelter of their protection.

This was Rhoda's explanation. She was standing before Dolly, looking prettier than ever. She held a flower in her hand, which she had offered her friend, who silently rejected it. Rhoda had looked for Dolly in vain in the house. She found her at last, disconsolately throwing crumbs to the fishes in the pond. Dolly stood sulky and miserable, scarcely looking up when Rhoda spoke. They were safe in the garden out of reach of the quiet old guardians of the house. Rhoda began at once.

"He urged it," said Rhoda, fixing her great dark eyes steadily upon Dolly, "indeed he did. I said no at first; I would not even let him be bound. One day I was weak and consented to be engaged. I sinned against my own conscience; I am chastised."

"Sinned?" said Dolly, impatiently; "chastised? Rhoda, Rhoda, you use long words that mean nothing. Oh! why did you not tell Aunt Sarah from the beginning? She loves George so dearly—so dearly that she would have done anything, consented to everything, and this wretchedness would have been spared. How shall I tell her? How shall I ever tell her? I can't keep such a secret. Already I have had to tell a lie."

"I could not bear to be the means of injuring him," Rhoda said, flushing up. "I daresay you won't understand me or believe me, but it is true. Indeed, indeed, it is true, Dolly. Lady Sarah would never forgive him now if he were to marry me. She does not like me. Dolly, you know it. I have been culpably foolish; but I will not damage his future."

"Of course it is foolish to be engaged," said Dolly; "but there are worse things, Rhoda, a thousand times."

"Yes," said Rhoda. "Dolly, you don't know half. He has been

gambling—dear, foolish boy—borrowing money from the Jews. Uncle John heard of it through a pupil of his. He wrote to Mr. Raban. Oh, Dolly, I love him so dearly, that it breaks my heart. How can I trust him? How can I? Oh, how difficult it is to be good, and to know what one should do."

Rhoda flung herself down upon the wooden bench, as she spoke, leaning her head against the low brick wall, with its ivy sprays. Dolly stood beside her, erect, indignant, half softened by the girl's passion and half hardened when she thought of the deception that she had kept up. Beyond the low ivy wall was the lane of which I have spoken, where some people were strolling; overhead the sky was burning deep, the afternoon shadows came trembling and shimmering into the pond. Lady Sarah had had a screen of creepers put up to shelter her favourite seat from the winds; the great leaves were still hanging to the trellis, gold and brown.

"If I thought only of myself should I not have told everybody?" said Rhoda, excitedly, and she clasped her hands; "but I feel there is a higher duty to him. I will be his good angel and urge him to work. I will leave him if I stand in his way, and keep to him if it is for good. Do you think I want to be a cause of trouble between him and Lady Sarah? She might disinherit him. It is you she cares for, and not poor George; I heard Mr. Raban say so only yesterday," cried Rhoda, in a sudden burst of tears. "He told me so."

Dolly waited for a moment and then slowly turned away, leaving Rhoda still sobbing against the bricks. She couldn't forgive her at that instant; her heart was bitter against her. What had she done to deserve such taunts? Why had Rhoda come making dissension and unhappiness between them? It was hard, oh, it was hard. There came a jangling burst of music from the church bells, as if to add to her bewilderment.

"Dear Rhoda," said Dolly, coming back, and melting suddenly, "do listen to me. Tell them all. I cannot see one reason against it."

"Except that we are no longer engaged," said Rhoda, gravely. "I have set him free, Dolly; that is what I wanted to tell you. I wrote to him, and set him free; for anything underhand is as painful to me as to you. It was only to please George I consented. Hush! They are calling me."

Engaged or not, poor Dorothea felt that all pleasure in her friend's company was gone, there was a tacit jar between them—a little rift. Dolly for the first time watched Rhoda with critical eyes, as she walked away down the path that led to the house, fresh and trim in her pretty dress, and her black silk mantlet, and with her flower in her hand. Dolly did not follow her. She thought over every single little bit of her life after Rhoda had left her, as she sat there alone, curled up on the wooden seat, with her limp violet dress in crumpled folds, and her brown hair falling loose, with pretty little twirls and wavings. Her grey eyes were somewhat sad and dim from the day's emotion. No, she must not tell her aunt what had happened until she had George's leave. She would see him soon; she

would beg his pardon; she would *make* him tell Aunt Sarah. She had been too hasty. She had spoken harshly, only it was difficult not to be harsh to Rhoda, who was so cold—who seemed as if she would not understand. All she said sounded so good, and yet, somehow, it did not come right. Dear George, dear, wicked boy, what had he been doing? Then she began to wonder if it could be that Rhoda loved him more than Dolly imagined. Some new glimmer had come to the girl of late—not of what love was, but of what it might be. Only Dolly was fresh and prim and shy, as girls are, and she put the thought far away from her. Love! Love was up in the stars, she thought hastily. All the same she could not bring herself to feel cordially to Rhoda. There was something miserably uncomfortable in the new relations between them; and Dolly showed it in her manner plainly enough.

Lady Sarah told Dolly that afternoon that she had written to George to come up at the end of the week. "He has had no pity on us, Dolly," she said. "I have some money that a friend paid back, and with that and the price of a field at Bartlemere I shall be able to pay for his pastimes during the last year.

"Aunt Sarah," said Dolly, suddenly illuminated, "can't you take some of my money; do, please, dearest Aunt Sarah."

"What would be the use of that?" said Lady Sarah. "I want the interest for your expenses, Dolly." She spoke quite sharply, as if in pain, and she put her hand to her side and went away. If Lady Sarah had not been ill herself and preoccupied, she might have felt that something also ailed Dolly, that the girl was constrained at times, and unlike herself. Dolly only wondered that her aunt did not guess what was passing before her, so patent did it seem, now that she had the key.

One day Marker persuaded her mistress to go to a doctor. Lady Sarah came back with one of those impossible prescriptions that people give. Avoid all anxiety; do not trouble yourself about anything; live generously; distract yourself when you can do so without fatigue.

Lady Sarah came home to find a Cambridge letter on the table, containing some old bills of George's, which a tradesman had sent on to her; a fresh call from the unlucky bank in which Mr. Francis had invested so much of her money; an appeal from Mikey's fever-stricken cellar, and a foreign scented letter, that troubled her more than all the rest together:—

"DEAREST SARAH,—

Trincomalee, September 25, 18—.

"I HAVE many and many a time begun to write to you of all, only to destroy bitter records of those sorrows which I must continue to bear *alone*. Soon we shall be leaving this ill-fated shore, where I have passed so many miserable years gazing with longing eyes at the broad expanse lying so calm and indifferent before me.

"Before long Admiral Palmer sails for England. He gives up his command with great reluctance, and returns *via* the Cape; but I, in my weak state of health, dare risk no longer delay. Friends—kind, good

friends, Mrs. and Miss M'Grudder—have offered to accompany me overland, sharing all expenses, and visiting Venice and Titian's—the great master's glorious works—*en route*, to say nothing of Raphael, and Angelo the divine. We shall rest a week at Paris. I feel that after so long a journey utter prostration will succeed to the excitement which carries me through where I see others, more robust than myself, failing on every side. And then I am in rags—a study for Murillo himself! I cannot come among you all until my wardrobe is replenished. How I look forward to the time when I shall welcome my Dorothea—ours, I may say—for you have been all but a mother to her. On my return I trust to find some corner to make my nest; and for that purpose I should wish to spend a week or two in London, so as to be within easy reach of all. Sarah, my first husband's sister, will you help me; for the love of “auld lang syne,” will you spare a little corner in your dear old house? Expensive hotels I cannot afford. My dear friends here agree that Admiral Palmer's ungraciously-given allowances are beggarly and unworthy of his high position. How differently dear Stan would have wished him to act! Silver and gold have I none—barely sufficient for my own dress. Those insurances were most unfairly given against the widow and the orphan. Tell my darlings this; tell them, too, that all that I have is theirs. When I think that for the last six years, ever since my second marriage, a tyrant will has prevented me from folding them to my heart, indignation nearly overcomes the prudence so foreign to my nature. Once more, fond love to you; to my boy, and to *ma fille*; and trusting before long to be once more at home,

“Ever your very affectionate

“PHILIPPA.”

“P.S.—Since writing the above few lines, I find that my husband wishes to compass my death. He again proposes my returning with him by the Cape. Sarah, will you spare me the corner of a garret beneath your roof?”

The letter was scented with some faint delicious perfume. “Here, take it away,” says Lady Sarah. “Faugh! Of course she knows very well that she can have the best bedroom, and the dressing-room for her maid; and you, my poor Dolly, will have a little amusement and some one better fitted to——”

“Don't,” cries Dolly, jumping forward with a kiss.

CHAPTER XXI.

CINDERS.

DOLLY went to afternoon church the day George was expected. When she came home she heard that her brother was upstairs, and she hurried along the passage with a quick-beating heart, and knocked at his door. It was dark in the passage, and Dolly stood listening—a frightened, grey-

eyed, pent-up indignation, in a black dress, with her bonnet in her hand. There was a dense cloud of smoke and tobacco in the room when Dolly turned the lock at last, and she could only cough and blink her eyes. As the fumes cleared away, she saw that George was sitting by the low wooden fireplace. He had been burning papers. How eagerly the flames leaped and travelled on, in bright blue and golden tongues, while the papers fell away black and crackling and changing to cinder. Dolly looked very pale and unlike herself. George turned with a bright, haggard sort of smile.

"Is that you, Dolly?" he said. "Come in; the illumination is over. You don't mind the smell of tobacco. I have been burning a box of cigars that Robert gave me. He knows no more about cigars than you do."

"Oh, George," cried Dolly. "Is this all you have to say, after making us so unhappy——"

"What do you want me to say?" said George, shrugging his shoulders.

"I want you to say that you have told her everything, and that there are no more concealments," Dolly cried, getting angry. "Oh, George, when Aunt Sarah asked me about you last I felt as if it was written in my face that I was lying."

He was going to answer roughly, but he looked up at Dolly's pale, agitated face, and was sorry for her. He spoke both kindly and crossly.

"Don't make such a talk, Dolly, and a fuss. We have had it out—John Morgan—council of state—she has been—she has been——" his voice faltered a little bit—"a great deal kinder than I deserve or had any reason to expect, judging by *you*, Dolly. It's not *your* business to scold, you know."

"And she knows all," said Dolly, eagerly and brightening.

"She knows all about my debts," said George, expressively. "She is going to let me try once more for the next scholarship. If I had been her I shouldn't have been so good. She shan't be disappointed this time. However, the past is past, and can't be helped. I've been burning a whole drawer full of it . . ." And he struck his foot into the smouldering heap.

People think that what is destroyed is over, forgetting that what has been is never over, and that it is in vain you burn and scatter the cinders of many a past hope and failure, and of a debt to pay, a promise broken. Debts, promises, failures are there still. There were the poems George had tried to write, the account-books he had not filled up, the lists of books he had not read, a dozen mementos of good intentions broken. There are the ugly Phoenixes as well as beautiful ones that rise out of the ashes.

"And did you not tell Aunt Sarah about Rhoda?" repeated Dolly, disappointed. "Oh, George, what does Rhoda mean when she says you are no longer engaged. What does it all mean?"

"It means, it means," said George, impatiently, "that I am an idiot, but I am not a sneak; and if a woman trusts me, I can keep her counsel,

so long as you don't betray me, Dolly. Only there are some things one can't do, not even for the woman one loves." Then he looked up suddenly, and seeing Dolly's pained face, he went on: "Dolly, I think you would cut off your head if I were to ask you for it: Rhoda won't snip off one little lock of hair. Poor dear, she is frightened at every shadow. She has given me back this," he said, opening his hand, which he had kept closed before, and showing Dolly a little pearl locket lying in his palm. Then he went on in a low voice, looking into the fire, "I love her enough, God knows, and I would tell the whole world, if she would let me. But she says no—always no; and I can trust her, Dolly, for she is nearer heaven than I am. It is her will to be silent," he said, gently; "angels vanish if we would look into their faces too closely. She would like me to have a tranquil spirit, such as her own; she thinks me a thousand times better than I am," said George, "and if I did as she wishes, I could be happy enough, but not contented." Dolly wondered of what he was thinking, as he went on pacing up and down the room. "I cannot tell lies to myself, not even for her sake. I cannot take this living, as she wishes. If I may not believe in God my own way, I should blaspheme and deny him, while I confessed him in some one else's words. You asked me one day if I had an inner life, Dolly," George said, coming back to the oak chimney-piece again. "Inner life is only one's self and the responsibility of this one life to the Truth. Sometimes I think that before I loved Rhoda I was not all myself, and though the truth was the same it did not concern me in the same degree, and I meant to do this or that as it might be most advisable. Now, through loving her, Dolly, I seem to have come to something beyond us both, and what is advisable don't seem to matter any more. Can you understand this?"

"Yes, George," said Dolly, looking at him earnestly—his sallow face had flushed up, his closed eyes had opened out. Dolly suddenly flung her arms round his neck and kissed him. She felt proud of her brother as she listened to him. She had come to blame, she remained to bless him. Ah, if every one knew him as well as she did. She was happier than she had been for many a day, and ready to believe that George could not be wrong. She could not even say no that evening after dinner, when George proposed that they should go over to the Morgans'.

"Go, my dears," said Lady Sarah; and Dolly got up with a sort of sigh to get her bonnet. Just as they were starting, her cousin Robert walked in unexpectedly, and proposed to accompany them. He had come in with a serious face, prepared to sympathize in their family troubles, and to add a few words in season, if desired, for George's benefit. He found the young man looking most provokingly cheerful and at home, Lady Sarah smiling, and if Dolly was depressed she did not show it, for, in truth, her heart was greatly lightened. The three walked off together.

"We shall not be back to tea," said Robert, who always liked to settle things beforehand. But on this occasion Mrs. Morgan's hospitable teapot was empty for once. The whole party had gone off to a lecture and

dissolving views in the Town Hall. The only person left behind was Tom Morgan, who was sitting in the study reading a novel, with his heels on the chimney-piece, when they looked in.

"Good-night, Tom," said Dolly, with more frankness than necessary; "we won't stay, since there is only you."

"Good-evening," said Robert, affably. And they came out into the street again. He went on: "I am sorry John Morgan was not at home. I want him to fix some time for coming down to Cambridge. You must come with him, Dolly. I think it might amuse you."

"Oh, thank you," says Dolly, delighted.

This prospect alone would have been enough to make her walk back enjoyable, even if George had not been by her side; if it had not been so lovely a night; if stars had not burnt sweet and clear overhead; if soft winds had not been stirring. The place looked transformed, gables and corners standing out in sudden lights. They could see the dim shade of the old church, and a clear green planet flashing with lambent streams beyond the square tower. Then they escaped from the crowd and turned down by the quiet lane where Church House was standing gabled against the great Orion. They found the door ajar when they reached the ivy gate; the hall door, too, was wide open, and there seemed to be boxes and some confusion.

"Oh, don't let us go in; come into the garden," said Dolly, running to the little iron garden-gate inside the outer wall. There was a strange glimmer behind the gate against which the slim white figure was pushing. The garden was dark, and rustling with a trembling in the branches. A great moon had come up, and was hanging over London, serenely silvering the housetops and spires; its light was rippling down the straight walks of which the gravel was glittering.

"Yes, come," said George, and the three young people flitted along to their usual haunt by the pond.

"What is that?" said Dolly, pointing in the darkness; "didn't somebody go by?" She was only a girl in her teens, and still afraid of unseen things.

"A rat," cried George, dashing forward.

"Oh, stop," from Dolly.

"Don't be a goose," said Robert; and as he spoke George met them, flourishing an old garden shawl of Lady Sarah's, which had been forgotten upon the bench. He flung it weirdly down upon the gravel walk. "'Dead for a ducat, dead,'" said he. Then he started forward with a strange moonlight gleam upon his face. "'This counsellor is now most still, most secret, and most grave,'" he said, "'who was in life a foolish prating knave.'" His voice thrilled, he got more and more excited.

Robert began to laugh: "What is it that you are acting?" he said.

"Acting?" cried George, opening his eyes; "'that skull had a tongue in it and could sing once.' 'Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth——?'"

"Those are his Eton speeches," said Dolly, "but George, you look terrible; please don't."

"Do be quiet," said Henley, impatiently. "Is not some one calling?"

Some one was calling: lights were appearing and disappearing; the drawing-room window was wide open, and their aunt stood on the terrace making signs, and looking out for them.

"Look, there goes a falling star," said George.

"Ah! who is that under the tree?" cried Dolly again, with a little shriek. "I knew I had seen some one move;" and as she spoke, a figure emerging from the gloom came nearer and nearer to them, almost running, with two extended arms; a figure in long flowing garments, silver in the moonlight, a woman advancing quicker and quicker.

"Children, children!" said a voice. "It is I,—George—your mother! Don't you know me—darlings? I have come. I was looking for you. Yes, it is I, your mother, children."

Dolly's heart stood still, and then began to throb, as the lady flung her arms round Robert, who happened to be standing nearest.

"Is this George! I should have known him anywhere," she cried.

Was this their mother? this beautiful, sweet, unseen woman, this pathetic voice!

Dolly had seized George's hand in her agitation, and was crunching it in hers. Robert had managed to extricate himself from the poor lady's agitated clutch.

"Here is George. I am Robert Henley," he said. "But, my dear aunt, why—why did you not write? I should have met you. I——"

It was all a strange confusion of moonlight, and bewilderment, and of tears, presently, for Mrs. Palmer began to cry and then to laugh, and finally went off into hysterics in her son's arms.

CHAPTER XXII.

MRS. PALMER.

WHEN they were a little calmed down, when they had left the moon and the stars outside in the garden, and were all standing in a group in the drawing-room round the chair in which Mrs. Palmer had been placed, Dolly saw her mother's face at last. She vaguely remembered her out of the long ago, a very young and beautiful face smiling at her: this face was rounder and fuller than the picture, but more familiar than her remembrance. Mrs. Palmer was a stout and graceful woman, with a sort of undulating motion peculiar to her, and with looks and ways some of which Dolly recognized, though she had forgotten them before. There was a strong likeness to Dolly herself, and even a little bit of George's look when he was pleased, though poor George's thick complexion and snub nose were far far removed from any likeness to that fair and delicate countenance. Dolly gazed admiringly at the soft white hand, with the

great Louis-Quinze ring upon the forefinger. Though Mrs. Palmer had come off a journey in semi-hysterics, she was beautifully dressed in a black silk dress, all over rippling waved flounces, that flowed to her feet. She was leaning back in the chair, with half-closed eyes, but with a tender, contented smile.

"I knew you would take me in," she said to Lady Sarah. "I felt I was coming home—to my dear sister's home. See," she said, "what dear Stan gave me for my wedding-gift. I chose it at Lambert's myself. We spared no expense. I have never taken off his dear ring;" and she put out her soft hand and took hold of Lady Sarah's mitten. "Oh, Sarah, to think—to think——"

Lady Sarah shrunk back as usual, though she answered not unkindly: "Not now, Philippa," she said, hastily. "Of course this house is your home, and always open to you; at least, when we know you are coming. Why did you not write? There is no bed ready. I have had the maids called up. If Admiral Palmer had let me know——"

"He did not know," said Mrs. Palmer, getting agitated. "I will tell you all. Oh, Dolly, my darling, beware how you marry; promise me——"

"He did not know?" interrupted Lady Sarah.

Dolly's mother got more and more excited.

"I had some one to take care of me," she said. "My old friend Colonel Wilkington was on board, and I told him everything as we were coming along. I telegraphed to you, did I not? But my poor head fails me. Oh, Sarah, exile is a cruel thing; and now, how do I know that I have not come home too soon?" she said, bursting into tears. "If you knew all——"

"You shall tell us all about it in the morning when you are rested," said Lady Sarah, with a glance at Robert.

"Yes, in the morning, yes," said Mrs. Palmer, looking relieved, and getting up from her chair, and wiping her eyes. "How good you are to me! Am I to have my old room where I used to stay as a girl? Oh, Sarah, to think of my longings being realized at last, and my darling children—dear Stan's children—there actually before me." And the poor thing, with a natural emotion, once more caught first one, then the other, to her, and sat holding her son's hand in both hers. When he tried to take it away she burst into fresh tears; and, as a last resource, Marker was summoned.

Poor Mrs. Palmer! her surprise had been something of a failure; George was not expansive, nor used to having his hand held: the boy and girl were shy, stiff, taken aback. Aunt Sarah was kind, but cross and bewildered. Mrs. Palmer herself exhausted after twelve hours' railway journey, and vaguely disappointed.

"It was just like her," said Lady Sarah, wearily, to Marker, as they were going upstairs some two hours later, after seeing Mrs. Palmer safe into her room, and bolting the doors, and putting out the lights of this eventful evening. "What can have brought her in this way?"

Marker looked at her mistress with her smiling round face. "The wonder to me, mum, was whatever kept her away so long from those sweet children, to say nothing of you, my lady."

"She has chosen to make other ties," said Lady Sarah; "her whole duty is to her husband. Good-night, Marker: I do not want you to-night."

"Of course, you know best, my lady," says Marker, doubtfully. "Good-night, my lady."

And then all was quite silent in the old house. The mice peeped out of their little holes and sniffed at the cheese-trap; a vast company of black beetles emerged from secret places and corners; the clocks began to tick like mad. Dolly lay awake a long time, and then dreamt of her new mamma, and of the moonlight that evening, and of a floating sea. Mrs. Palmer slept placidly between her linen sheets. Sarah Francis lay awake half the night crying her eyes and her aching heart away in bitter tears. Philippa was come. She knew of old what her advent meant. She loved Philippa, but with reserve and pain; and now she would claim her Dolly, she would win her away, and steal her treasure from her again—what chance had she, sad and sorry and silent, with no means of uttering her love? She was a foolish, jealous woman; she knew it, and with all her true heart she prayed for strength and for love to overcome jealousy and loneliness. Once in her life her jealous nature had caused misery so great between her and her husband that the breach had never been repaired, and it was Philippa who had brought it all about. How jealous poor Sarah had been, how unhappy Philippa had made her! Now Sarah knew that to love more is the only secret for overcoming that cruellest madness of jealousy, and to love more was her prayer. The dawn came at last, stealing tranquilly through the drawn curtains; with what peace and tranquillity the faint light flowed, healing and quieting her pain.

Dolly's new mamma's account of herself next morning was a little incoherent. Her health was very indifferent; she suffered agonies, and was living upon morphia when the doctor had ordered her home without delay. She had been obliged to come off at a few hours' notice; she didn't write. The Admiral was fortunately absent on a cruise, or he never would have let her go. He knew what a helpless creature she was. She had borrowed the passage-money from a friend. Would Lady Sarah please advance her a little now, as she was literally penniless, and she wished to make George and Dolly some presents, and to engage a French maid at once? She supposed she should hear by the next post and receive some remittances. She was not sure, for Hawtry was so dreadfully close about money. She did not know *what* he would say to her running away. No doubt he would use dreadful language, pious as he was; *that* she was used to; Colonel Wilkerington could testify to it. . . . And then she sighed. "I have made my own fate; I must bear my punishment," she said. "I shall try some German baths before his return, to brace my nerves for the—the future."

There was something soft, harmonious, gently affecting about Dolly's mamma. When Mrs. Palmer spoke she looked at you with two brown eyes shining out of a faded but charming face: she put out an earnest white hand; there was a charming natural affectation about her. She delighted in a situation. She was one of those fortunate people whose parts in life coincide with their dispositions. She had been twice married. As a happy wife people had thought her scarcely aware of the prize she had drawn. As an injured woman she was simply perfect. She did not feel the Admiral's indifference deeply enough to lose her self-possession, as he did. Admiral though he was, and extempore preacher, he could not always hold his own before this susceptible woman. Her gentle impressiveness completely charmed and won the children over.

The conversation of selfish people is often far more amusing than that of the unselfish, who see things too *diffusedly*, and who have not, as a rule, the gift of vivid description. Mrs. Palmer was deeply, deeply interested in her own various feelings. She used to whisper long stories to George and Dolly about her complicated sorrows, her peculiar difficulties. Poor thing! they were real enough, if she had but known them; but the troubles that really troubled her were imaginary for the most part. She had secured two valiant champions before breakfast next morning, at which meal Robert appeared. He had slept upon the crisis, and now seemed more than equal to it; affectionate to his aunt, with whom he was charmed, readily answering her many questions, skilfully avoiding the subject of her difficulties with the Admiral, of which he had heard before at Henley Court. He was pleased by his aunt's manner and affectionate dependence, and he treated her from the first with a certain manly superiority. And yet—so she told Dolly—even Robert scarcely understood her peculiar difficulties.

"How can he, dear fellow? He is prejudiced by Lady Henley—odious woman! I can trace her influence. She was a Palmer, you know, and she is worthy of the name. I dread my visit to Yorkshire. This is my real home."

Mrs. Palmer's mother, Lady Henley, had been an Alderville, and the Aldervilles are all young, beautiful, helpless, stout, and elegantly dressed. Mrs. Palmer took after them, she said. But helpless as Philippa was, her feebleness always leant in the direction in which she wished to go, and, in some mysterious fashion, she seemed to get on as well as other stronger people. Some young officer, in a complimentary copy of verses, had once likened her to a lily. If so, it was a water-lily that she resembled most, with its beautiful pale head drifting on the water, while underneath was a long, limp, straggling stalk firmly rooted. Only those who had tried to influence her knew of its existence.

Dolly and George hung upon her words. George felt inclined to go off to Ceylon on purpose to shoot the Admiral with one of his own Colt's revolvers. Dolly thrilled with interest and excitement and sympathy. Her mother was like a sweet angel, the girl said to her brother. It was

a wonderful new life that had begun for them. The trouble which had so oppressed Dolly of late seemed almost forgotten for a time. Lady Sarah, coming and going about the house, would look with a strange half-glad, half-sad glance at the three heads so near together in the recess of the window: Philippa leaning back, flushed and pathetic; George by her side, making the most hideous faces, as he was used to do when excited; Dolly kneeling on the floor, with her two elbows in her mother's lap, and her long chin upturned in breathless sympathy. Admiral—jealousy—meanness—cruel—mere necessities: little words like this used to reach Lady Sarah, creaking uneasily and desolately, unnoticed, round and round the drawing-room.

"Is it not a pity, Philippa, to put such ideas into their heads?" says Lady Sarah, from the other end of the room.

Then three pair of eyes would be turned upon her with a sort of reproachful wonder, and the trio would wait until she was out of hearing to begin again.

Mrs. Palmer was certainly an adaptable woman in some ways: one husband or another, one life or another. So long as she had her emotions, her maid, her cups of tea, her comfortable sofa, and some one to listen to her, she was perfectly happy. She carried about in herself such an unfailing source of interest and solicitude, that no other was really necessary to her; although, to hear her speak, you would imagine her fate to be one long regret.

"My spirit is quite broken," she would say, cheerfully. "Give me that small hand-screen, Dolly; for *your* sake, Sarah, I will gladly chaperone Dolly to Cambridge, as Robert proposes (it must be after my return from Yorkshire); but I do wish you would let me write and ask for an invitation for you. George, poor fellow, wants me to bring Rhoda and the Morgan girls. I do hate girls. It is really wicked of him."

"If that were George's worst offence——," said his Aunt Sarah, grimly.

"My poor boy!" said Mrs. Palmer. "Sarah, you are not a mother, and do not understand him. Come here, darling George. How I wish I could spare you from going back to those horrid examinations!"

George flushed up very red. "I should be very sorry to be spared," he muttered.

Mrs. Palmer used to ask Robert endless questions about Henley Court, and his aunt Lady Henley. "Was she looking as weather-beaten as ever? Did she still wear plaids? Vulgar woman!" whispered Mrs. Palmer to Dolly. Robert pretended not to hear. "I shall make a point of going there, Robert," she said, "and facing the Henley buckram." Robert gravely assured her that she would be most welcome.

"Welcome, my dear Robert! You cannot imagine what an impertinent letter I have received from Joanna," says Mrs. Palmer. "I shall go when it is convenient to me, if only to show her that I do not care for anything she can say. Joanna's style is only to be equalled by the Admiral's. The mail will be in on Monday."

So Philippa remained a victim, placidly sipping her coffee and awaiting the Admiral's insulting letters. The only wonder was that they had not burst their envelopes and seals, so explosive were they. His fury lashed itself into dashes and blots and frantic loops and erasures. The bills had come in for her bracelets and mufflers and tinkling ornaments. Had she forgotten the fate of the daughters of Jerusalem, that went mincing and tinkling with their feet? She might take a situation as a kitchen-maid for all he cared. She was a spendthrift, idle, extravagant, good-for-nothing, &c. &c. Not one farthing would he allow her, &c. &c.; and so on. Mrs. Palmer used to go up to her room in high spirits to lie down to rest on the days they arrived, and send for Colonel Wilkington to consult upon them.

She would not come down till dinner was just over, and appeared on these occasions in a long grey sort of dressing-gown and a *négligé* little lace cap; she used to dine off almonds and raisins and cups of coffee, to Lady Sarah's secret indignation. "Oh, Sarah, *you* will not turn me away?" Mrs. Palmer would say, leaning back in languid comfort. Lady Sarah was very sorry, but somewhat sceptical. She would meet Pauline carrying French novels to the library after scenes which had nearly unnerved them all.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TERRACE AT ALL SAINTS' COLLEGE.

SOMEWHERE in the fairyland of Dorothea's imagination rises a visionary city, with towers and gables straggling against the sky. The streets go up hill and down hill, leading by cloisters and gateways and bywalls, behind which gardens are lying like lakes of green among the stones and the ivy. A thrush is singing, and the shrill echoes of some boyish melancholy voices come from a chapel hard by. It is a chapel with a pile of fantastic columns standing in the quiet corner of a lane. All round the side door are niches and winding galleries, branches wreathing, placed there by faithful hands, crisp saints beatified in stony glory. Are these, one is tempted to ask as one looks at the generous old piles, the stones that cry out now-a-days when men are silent? They have, for the last century or two, uttered warnings and praises to many a generation passing by; speaking to some of a bygone faith, to others of a living one. They still tell of past love and hope, and of past and present charity.

But in these times charity is a destroying angel; even the divine attributes seem to have changed, and Faith, Hope, and Charity have gone each their separate way.

To Dolly Vanborough, who had thought happiness was over for ever, it was the first great song of her youth that these old stones sang to her on her eighteenth birthday. She hears it still, though her youth is past. It is the song of the wonder of life, of the divine in the human. As we

go on its echoes reach us repeated again and again, reverberating from point to point; who that has heard them once will ever forget them? To some they come with happiness and the delight of new undreamt-of sympathy, to others with sorrow and the realization of love. . . . Its strains came with prayer and long fasting to the saints of old. This song of Pentecost, I know no better name for it, echoes on from generation to generation from one heart to another. Sometimes by chance one has looked into a stranger's face and seen its light reflected. Frank Raban saw its light in Dolly's face that day as she came out of the chapel to where her brother had left her. Just for an instant it was there while the psalm still sung in her heart. And yet the light in Dolly's face dimmed a little when she saw, not the person she had expected to see, but Mr. Raban waiting there.

"I came in Henley's place," said he, hastily, guessing her thought. "He was sent for by the Vice-Chancellor, and begged me to come and tell you this. He will join us directly."

Mr. Raban had been waiting in the sunshiny street while Dolly deliberately advanced down the worn steps of the chapel, crossed the flagged court, and came out of the narrow iron wicket of which the barred shadow fell upon her white fete-day dress. Miss Vanborough's face was shaded by a broad hat with curling blue feathers; she wore a pink rose in her girdle; it was no saintly costume; she was but a commonplace mortal maiden in sprigged muslin, and saints wear, as we all know, red and blue, and green, stained glass and damask and goatskins; and yet Frank Raban thought there was something saint-like in her bright face, which, for an instant, seemed reflecting all her heart.

"Henley lives on my staircase," continued Raban. "Those pink frills are his. He makes himself comfortable, as you see."

"I'm glad of that," said Dolly, smiling. "How nice it must be for you to have him so near."

"He always takes ladies to see his rooms," Raban continued. "He is a great favourite with them, and gives tea-parties."

"A great favourite!" said Dolly, warmly. "Of course one likes people who are kind and good and clever and true and nice."

"Who are, in short, an addition sum, made up of equal portions of all the cardinal virtues," said Raban.

He was ashamed of himself, and yet he did not care to hear Henley's praises from Dolly. It seemed to him dishonest to acquiesce.

Dolly stopped for half a second and looked at him.

Dorothea was a tall woman, and their eyes were on a line, and their looks met. My heroine was at no pains to disguise the meaning of her indignant glances. "How can you be so ungenerous?" she said, as plainly as if she had spoken.

Frank answered her silence in words.

"No, I don't like him," he said, "and he don't like me; and I don't care to pretend to better feelings than I really have. We are civil enough, and

pull very well together. I beg your pardon. I own he deserves to succeed," said the young man. "There, Miss Vanborough, this is our garden, where we refresh ourselves with cigars and beer after our arduous studies."

Dolly was still too much vexed to express her admiration.

They all began calling to them from under the tree. John Morgan, who was of the party, was lying flat upon his broad back, beaming at the universe, and fanning away the flies. Rhoda was sitting on the grass, in a foam of white muslin and Algerian shawls. George Vanborough, privileged for the day, was astride on a wooden table; a distant peacock went strutting across the lawn; a little wind came blowing gently, stirring all the shadows; a college bell began to tinkle a little, and then left off.

"Glorious afternoon, isn't it?" says John Morgan, from the grass.

"It is like heaven," says Dolly, looking up and round and about.

Rhoda's slim fingers clasp her pearl locket, which has come out again. They were in the shade, the sun was shining hot and intense upon the old garden. The roses, like bursting bubbles, were breaking in the heat against the old baked bricks, upon rows of prim collegiate flowers: lilies, and stocks, and marigolds. There was a multiplicity of sweet scents in the air, of shadows falling on the lawns (they flow from the old gates to the river); a tone is struck, an insect floats away along the garden wall. With its silence and flowers, and tremulous shades and sunshine, I know no sweeter spot than the old garden of All Saints'.

The gardener had placed seats and a bench under the old beech-tree for pilgrims to rest upon, weary with their journeys from shrine to shrine. Mrs. Palmer was leaning back in a low garden-chair; the sweep of her flowing silks seemed to harmonize with her languid and somewhat melancholy grace. Rhoda was helping to open her parasol (the parasol was dove-coloured and lined with pink). There was a row of Morgans upon the bench; Mrs. Morgan upright in the midst, nicely curled and trimmed with satin bows and a white muslin daughter on either side.

It all happened in a moment: the sky burnt overhead, the sun shone upon the river, upon the colleges, with their green gardens: the rays seemed to strike fire where they met the water. The swans were sailing along the stream in placid state, followed by their grey brood, skimming and paddling in and out among the weeds and the green stems and leaves that sway with the ripple of the waters; a flight of birds high overhead crossed the vault of the heavens and disappeared in the distance. Dorothea Vanborough was standing on the terrace at the end of the old college garden, where everything was so still, so sweet, and so intense that it seemed as if time was not, as if the clocks had stopped on their travels, as if no change could ever be, nor hours nor seasons sweep through the tranquil old place.

They were all laughing and talking; but Dolly, who was too lazy and too happy to talk, wandered away from them a little bit, to the garden's end, where she stood stooping over the low wall and watching the water flow by; there was a man fishing on the opposite bank, and casting his

line again and again. In the distance a boat was drifting along the stream, some insects passed out towards the meadows humming their summer drone, a wasp sailed by. Dolly was half standing, half-sitting, against the low terrace wall; with one hand she was holding up her white muslin skirt, with the other she was grasping the ledge of the old bricks upon which the lichen had been at work spreading their gold and grey. So the girl waited, sunning herself; herself a part of the summer's day, and gently blooming and rejoicing in its sweetness like any rose upon the wall.

Some people that day, Frank Raban among them, had thought her not unlike a rose herself.

There are blissful moments when one's heart seems to beat in harmony with the great harmony: when one is oneself light and warmth, and the delight of light, and a voice in the comfortable chorus of contentment and praise all round about. Such a minute had come to Dolly in her white muslin dress, with the Cam flowing at her feet and the lights dazzling her grey eyes.

Mrs. Morgan gave a loud sneeze under the tree, and the beautiful minute broke and dispersed away.

"I wonder what it can be like to grow old," Dolly wonders, looking up; "to remember back for years and years, and to wear stiff curls and satinette?" Dolly began to picture to herself a long procession of future selves, each older and more curiously bedizened than the other. Somehow they seemed to make a straight line between herself and Mrs. Morgan under the tree. It was an uncomfortable fancy. Dolly tried to forget it, and leant over the wall, and looked down into the cool depths of the stream again. Was that fish rising? What was this? Her own face again looking up from the depth. Then Dolly turned, hearing a step upon the gravel, to see Robert Henley coming towards her. He was dressed in his college cap and gown, and he advanced, floating balloon-like, along the terrace. He looked a little strange, she thought, as he came up to her.

"I couldn't get away before," he said. "I hope you have been well looked after."

"Yes, indeed. Come and sit down here, Robert. What a delicious old garden this is! We are all so happy! Look at those dear little swans in the river!"

"Do you like the cygnets?" said Robert, abruptly, as he looked her full in the face, and sat down on the low wall beside her. "Do you remember Charles Martindale?" he asked; "whom we met once at John Morgan's, who went out to India? He is coming home next October."

"Is he?" said Dolly. "Look at that little grey cygnet scuttling away!"

"Dolly," said Henley, quickly, "they sent for me to offer me his place, and I—I—have accepted it."

"Accepted it?" said his cousin, forgetting the cygnets, and looking

up a little frightened. "Oh! Robert, but you will have to go to India and leave everybody?"

Her face changed a little, and Robert's brightened, though he tried to look as usual.

"Not everybody," he said. "Not if——" He took the soft hand in his that was lying on the wall beside him. "Dolly! will you come too?" he said.

"Me?" cried the unabashed Dolly. "Oh, Robert, how could I?"

"You could come if I married you," said Robert, in his quiet voice and most restrained manner. "Dearest Dorothea, don't you think you can learn to love me? It will be nearly five months before I start."

It was all so utterly incomprehensible that the girl did not quite realize her cousin's words. Robert was looking very strange and unlike himself; Dolly could hardly believe that it was not some effect of the dazzle of light in her own eyes. He was paler than usual; he seemed somehow stirred from his habitual ways and self. She thought it was not even his voice that she heard speaking. "Is this being in love?" she was saying to herself. A little bewildered flush came into her cheeks. She still saw the sky, and the garden, and the figures under the tree; then for a minute everything vanished, as tangible things vanish before the invisible, —just as spoken words are hushed and lose their meaning when the silent voices cry out.

It was but for a moment. There she stood again, staring at Robert with her innocent, grey-eyed glance.

Henley was a big, black-and-white melancholy young man, with a blue shaved chin. To-day his face was pale, his mouth was quivering, his hair was all on end. Could this be Robert who was so deliberate; who always knew his own mind; who looked at his watch so often in church while music was going on? Even now, from habit, he was turning it about in his pocket. This little trick made Dolly feel more than anything else that it was all true—that her cousin loved her—incredible though it might appear—and yet even still she doubted.

"Me, Robert?" repeated Dorothea, in her clear, childish tones, looking up with her frank yet timid eyes. "Are you sure?"

"I have been sure ever since I first saw you," said Henley, smiling down at her, "at Kensington, three years ago. Do you remember the snowball, Dolly?"

Then Dolly's eyes fell, and she stood with a tender, puzzled face, listening to her first tale of love. She suddenly pulled away her hand, shy and blushing.

The swans had hardly passed beyond the garden-terrace; the fisherman had only thrown his line once again; Dolly's mamma had time to shift her parasol: that was all. Henley waited, with his handsome head a little bent. He was regaining his composure; he knew too much of his cousin's uncompromising ways to be made afraid by her silence. He stood pulling at his watch, and looking at her—at the straight white figure amid

dazzling blue and green; at the line of the sweet face still turned away from him.

"I thought you would have understood me better?" he said, reproachfully.

Still Dolly could not speak. For a moment her heart had beat with an innocent triumph, and then came a doubt. Did she love him—could she love him? Had he then cared for her all this time, when she herself had been so cold and so indifferent, and thinking so little of him? Only yesterday she had told Rhoda she should never marry. Was it yesterday? No, it was to-day, an hour ago. . . . What had she done to deserve so much from him?—what had she done to be so overprized and loved? At the thought quick upspringing into her two grey eyes came the tears, sparkling like the diamonds in Rhoda's cross.

"I never thought you thought"—Dolly began. "Oh, Robert! you have been in earnest all this time, and I only—only playing."

"Don't be unhappy," said her cousin. "It was very natural; I should not have wished it otherwise. I did not want to speak to you till I had something worth your acceptance."

"All this long time!" repeated Dolly.

Did the explanations of true love ever yet run smooth? "Dolly?" cried Mrs. Palmer, from under the tree.

"Hulloa, Robert!" shouted George, coming across the grass towards them.

"Oh, Robert!" said Dorothea, earnestly, unexpectedly, with a sudden resolution to be true—true to him and to herself, "thank you a thousand times for what you have told me: only it mustn't be—I don't care enough for you, dear Robert! You deserve——"

Henley said not a word. He stood with a half-incredulous smile; his eyes were still fixed on Dolly's sweet face; he did not answer George, who again called out something as he came up. As for Dolly, she turned to her brother and sprang to meet him, and took his arm as if for protection, and then she walked quickly away without another look, and Henley remained standing where she had been. Instead of the white-muslin maiden, the cygnets may have seen a black-silk young man, who looked at his watch, and then walked away too; while the fisherman quietly baited his line and went on with his sport.

Dramatic Situation and Dramatic Character.

THERE are only two nations whose literature has culminated in a really supreme dramatic movement. The Hindoo dramatists have the highest name among all the authors whose human personality is acknowledged by Hindoo piety; but the dramatic framework does not transform the fundamental conception of the story. *Sakuntala* is very pretty; but the prettiest parts would be far prettier as idylls, and then they would be almost exactly on a level with the episode of Nala and Damayanti in the *Mahabharata*. In Latin literature everything is derivative; but it is only in dramatic literature that free translation passed for authorship, and the originality of Seneca certainly does not make us regret the fidelity of Terence. The chief poets of the great literary age of France and Germany were doubtless dramatists, if we are to class them by the extent and even the quality of their dramatic works. Still it is enough to make us hesitate when Boileau claims Racine as a mere *bel esprit* whom he has trained to write smooth verse, and Mr. Mill pronounces him an admirable prose writer who only becomes a poet in the choruses of *Esther* and *Athalie*. The great German poets have been judged by a very wide and a very intelligent public, and their reputation as poets does not rest on their dramas, though these constitute the bulk of their poetical works. There are editions of Schiller's and Goethe's poems apart from their plays; there are editions of Shakspeare's plays apart from his poems. The fact is that the classical drama of France is too academical to be national; and the classical drama of Germany is too literary to be quite dramatic. Spain has only given two classical writers to European literature—Cervantes and Calderon,—and one of these is, with all his *naïveté* and incompleteness, one of the greatest among dramatists. Calderon is the highest legitimate expression of everything that Cervantes satirized, of everything that made Spain Spanish. Cervantes belongs to all the world, Calderon belongs to Spain; at least outside Spain his secular dramas are left to the student. He reaches the general public so far as he does reach it through his religious pageants, which are Catholic as well as Spanish. The Italians had a fruitful and a splendid literature, but no national drama, perhaps because they had no national life. Their highest literature belongs to Europe rather than to themselves. The cosmopolite civilization of the middle age was idealized in Italy as it was realized in France. Dante reflected its Catholicism, Petrarch and Ariosto reflected the sentimental and the adventurous aspects of its chivalry. Nothing was really their own but the pathetic or comic incidents of contemporary life (for even the

past belonged to Rome or the barbarians), and these found their appropriate vehicle in the novel, not in the drama.

It is only in Greece and England that we find a really normal dramatic literature at once classical and popular. The Greek and the English drama are so different, and each of them is so varied, that we hardly need go beyond them for illustrations of our subject. It might have been necessary to find a wider basis if we were laying down canons of dramatic art, for after all, in spite of Lessing, there is something in Corneille's complaint that Aristotle might have enlarged his conception of tragedy by reading *Polyeucte*. But it is hardly necessary to prove, what might be proved from the dramatic literature of any country, or of all, that situation is of the essence of the drama. Good poetry of any kind includes something of the characteristic interest of every kind. Homer has much of the interest of Euripides; Pindar has much of the interest of Homer; Euripides in turn has much of the interest of Sappho and Mimnermus. But a poem which has not a good story and noble and brilliant scenery is not an epic; a poem without emotion may be elevated and musical, but it is not lyrical. In the same way a poem, however lifelike and characteristic it may be, is not dramatic unless its action depends upon clearly contrasted situations. It is not too much to say that in a perfect dramatic poem characters, incidents, manners, everything are contained in and deduced from the situation, which is assumed as the starting point. Achilles comes ready made into the *Iliad*; Satan and the Red Cross Knight come ready made into *Paradise Lost* and the *Fairy Queen*. Their characters are not determined by the story, the story is not determined by their characters. Some of their adventures they find, others they make, in both they are themselves: they are conceived by the poet and presented to the reader in their detached individual character. This is not the method of the drama: there the characters form a group, the whole of which must be conceived at once, because each member of it is related to all the rest, and his individuality depends upon theirs. Hamlet would be nothing, or something wholly different, we do not say apart from his mother or Ophelia, but apart from Polonius and Rosencrantz; his perplexities are aggravated by irritating contact with a number of nonentities; Ulysses, apart from the Suitors and from Circe, would be Ulysses still: Orestes apart from his mission would be nothing: Malcolm would not be much; and is only individualized by a tendency to seek relief in self-accusation from the burden of responsibility. But even in the severest form of the drama, characters may be elaborated up to any point. The Clytemnestra of each of the three great Attic tragedians is a perfectly distinct conception, but all alike are deduced from the legendary situation. Æschylus dwells upon the wrongs that all but justified her crime, and upon the energy that achieved it; Sophocles represents her as hardened and brutalized by her success; in Euripides she is betrayed to her punishment by her own kindness, which revives as selfishness passes into lassitude; all assume that they have to embody the

figure of an adulteress enthroned with her paramour upon her husband's grave.

It is necessary to develop such characters as Clytemnestra or Richard III. from within, otherwise their wickedness would be too revolting for art; but in general a simpler proceeding is sufficient. Comedy seems to start everywhere with a traditional group of drolls; it is the essence of each to play upon the rest, and the genius of the comic writer shows itself not so much by his success in animating and individualizing these conventional types—though it shows itself there also—as by the success with which he avails himself of the adventures which grow out of their relations, to interpret, to criticize, and to ridicule the life of his own day. True, there is no room for mere walking gentlemen; the brave Gyas and the brave Cloanthus are essentially undramatic: the faithful Achates, thin and shadowy as he is, has earned a kind of popularity in Virgil, in Sophocles the equally faithful Pylades is reduced to the rank of a mute. But though dramatic characters have to be contrasted, we commonly find that the situation contrasts them enough. When Pylades attains a real character in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, he attains it simply from the force of circumstances. One of the two friends is to return to Greece, the other is to be sacrificed, each naturally wishes (for we are in the heroic age) to die for the other; only, as luck will have it, Pylades can make the offer first. For anything that appears, the generosity of Orestes was similar in quality; it is certainly meant to be equal in quantity; but he has to refuse what Pylades offers; his devotion is negative, that of Pylades is positive. It would have been easy to make the contrast a matter of temperament: Orestes might well have been represented as less buoyant, less eager, though not less devoted than a friend who had not lost a father, whom no furies had haunted, whom no oracles had driven to matricide; but Euripides knew how to economize his resources. The contest of generosity was complete in itself, it was sufficiently interesting to his audience; it might have been too fatiguing, not to say too painful, if he had gone into the reasons which led him to distribute the interest between his characters, although these reasons flowed naturally from his subject. In the *Two Noble Kinsmen*—one of the very finest of the secondary works of the great age of English drama—there is another pair of contrasted heroes, whose characters are thoroughly dramatic, and yet are deduced from the very simplest difference in their situation. In the scene at Thebes with Creon there is no distinction between the haughty and fastidious loyalty of Palamon and the contemptuous gallantry of Arcite; in the first scene in the prison at Athens there is still no difference between their exuberant magnanimity, till Palamon sees Emily first, and so establishes a shadowy claim, if not to enjoy her affection, at least to pine unmolested under her disdain. At once Palamon acquires a distinctive character—he assumes the demeanours of an injured man; Arcite has to defend himself: he acquires a distinctive character too. The next change of the situation

adds another shade to the difference of the characters. Arcite is released, he regains the full enjoyment of his knightly privileges; Palamon has to escape as he can (he does so by the help of the jailor's daughter, a feeble copy of Ophelia), and when free he is so destitute that he cannot even carry on the quarrel until Arcite has helped him to armour. Perhaps this generosity ought to have subdued him; perhaps it was mean of him not to be subdued. But, on the whole, Palamon's misfortunes invest him with a sort of sentimental radiance which prepares us for the catastrophe, in which the poet contrasts his prosperous devotion to Venus with Arcite's unprosperous devotion to Mars. But from first to last we are kept close to the situation; we are not allowed, much less encouraged, to suppose that Palamon was naturally gentler than Arcite. As we have said, the nearest approach to an ungenerous action which the poem contains is assigned to Palamon. It is he that insists upon not interrupting the duel in the wood, after he has been warned that he is exposing both himself and his friendly enemy to the tender mercies of the Athenian police; and this though he has only just escaped them himself, and owes his continued liberty to the assistance of the man whose liberty he imperils without even the prospect of advantage to his own devouring love. How could he be magnanimous when he has just been urging his wrongs to a rival under whose generosity he was smarting, or why should the poet have sacrificed the obvious dramatic propriety of this situation merely to establish an original difference between two characters which are sufficiently distinguished by the progress of events? Not to mention that any difference of character beyond what flowed from the situation would have been an inconvenience in itself, for as the play stands much of the interest depends upon the fact that Emily cannot make up her own mind because there is not really a pin to choose between the very deserving candidates for her hand.

Pylades and Palamon are cold and shallow conceptions compared with Othello; but he is, in even a higher degree than they, the creature of his situation. A grim, not ungenerous man, between a young wife and a vindictive dependant—that is the situation. When the situation is described, there is no need to analyse the character. Desdemona, again, is an exquisite creation; but Coleridge was quite right in selecting her as an instance of how characterless, in a good sense, women—especially Shakspeare's women—are. She leaves an entirely distinct impression from Imogen; but the distinction is of a kind that disappears when we strip each of the heroines of her surroundings. Desdemona has for a few moments the power of exercising patronage and showing kindness. This gives her an air of gracious loftiness which Imogen has not. Imogen, when she is falsely accused, is at a distance from her husband; she has the resource of flight, she can be cheered by simple pleasures, for she has not so far to fall as Desdemona. Othello, on the contrary, is always at hand; his wife feels the circle narrowing round her, without any opportunity for defence or escape. She

interests us by her mute resignation, for she is not accused until she has been condemned; Imogen interests us by her helpless adventurousness. But the foundation of the character is the same in both—innocence and cheerful resignation.

Antigone and Ismene, Electra and Chrysothemis, are familiar examples of contrasts of character immediately deduced from a given situation. In both cases we have two sisters placed in a situation where abstract right is on one side, and prudence and force upon the other; in both cases we have a gentler sister who chooses prudence, and a loftier sister who chooses right. Yet Electra is not a duplicate of Antigone, nor Ismene an echo of Chrysothemis. Electra is a champion, Antigone is a martyr; Electra has a wrong to revenge—a right to recover, Antigone has only a duty to perform, or rather she has to decide between conflicting duties, for she is bound to obey Creon in all things lawful; while Electra has ceased to feel that she owes anything to her mother: consequently with Electra heroism is only a matter of feeling; with Antigone it is a matter of reason too. The same cause which elevates the self-devotion of Antigone, dignifies the submission of Ismene; though she chooses the safer duty, she chooses a duty still; though she will not share her sister's deed, she is eager to share the penalty.

In secondary plays, like *Henry IV.* or *Much Ado about Nothing*, we meet with characters, like Falstaff and Dogberry, which are in no sense invented from the situation, for when the situation is given, the characters have still to be created; they are hardly invented for the situation in the sense that such a character is absolutely needed to make the situation credible; but the situation determines the limits within which the character shall be developed, and the space which it shall be allowed to fill. The standing situation of both parts of *Henry IV.* is the contrast between the prince's abilities and his inclination; this required that he should be provided with a butt and tempter in one—Shakspeare created a Falstaff. The *dénouement* of *Much Ado about Nothing* seemed to require a stupid watchman as the most humiliating *Deus ex machina* conceivable—Shakspeare created a Dogberry. The Greek drama contains some pale foreshadowings of Dogberry in the worthy men who watch the beacons in the *Agamemnon*, and the dead body of Polynices in the *Antigone*, but they only appear when they are wanted, and are not allowed to exhibit themselves on their own account. The severity of ancient taste did not allow them space to be interesting: it was enough, since they must appear, if they were sufficiently individual not to be tedious. The watchman in the *Agamemnon* has a rudimentary character; the herald has none, for the herald cannot be tedious—his message is of itself sufficient to interest the audience.

But the real proof of the supremacy of situation in the ancient Greek drama is that, wherever the poet has to choose between working out a situation or working out a character, he invariably chooses the first. In the *Eumenides*, if not before, we might have expected to find the

personality of Orestes invested with something of the interest of Hamlet. We are kept instead to the blank alternative of horror and hope. He is not allowed to speak his own words or to think his own thoughts as he waits in hushed awe for the verdict which is to decide whether the God of Light can deliver his servant from a mother's curse. From the *Eumenides* to the *Orestes* is an immense descent, but it has been traversed without awakening in the poet or his audience the least curiosity about the personality of the protagonist. He is touching in the first scene, shabby and spiteful in the rest of the play; throughout his character is the reflection of his fortune—first on the spiritual side, then on the material. Again, in taking up Goethe's *Iphigenia*, we see at once that his first and last thought is how to make the character of the priestess intelligible and loveable. Euripides gets through his admirable play without giving the matter a thought; his Iphigenia is first a model of impassive dignity, then a sister melting over a long-lost brother, then a clever Greek outwitting a barbarian. He feels no incongruity, and there is none; nor does he feel the need of imagining an unity deeper than the legend of itself supplied. What modern poet could have imagined the situation of Cassandra in the *Agamemnon* without trying to read a character into it? What endless subtleties of true and delicate psychology would have been suggested to a Shakspeare or a Browning by the figure of the captive prophetess! Was she resigned, or rebellious, or penitent? Did she endure Agamemnon, or love him, or pity him? How had he put aside her warnings? and had she forgiven him for putting them aside? Æschylus tells us nothing of all this. He only shows us her intense horror at the blood which clings to the house which for her is not even to be an house of bondage. Once more, no tragic character is loftier or lovelier than the Antigone of Sophocles, yet even she is subordinated to the situation. When the poet has exhausted the full interest of her constancy, he proceeds to exhaust the full interest of her agony. The two are simply put side by side as they might stand side by side in life; and there is something heroic in this directness and simplicity and absence of self-consciousness. But when we turn to the *Cenci*, and observe how Shelley has thought out and prepared for all the transitions between the varying moods of his heroine, we see that Sophocles did not write his play, though we read it, for the character of Antigone.

It is difficult to maintain this supremacy of the situation in the modern drama, if for no other reason, because there is so much more movement on the stage; the characters are always coming and going, and if the bustle is not to result in confusion, it is necessary to make their features as distinctive as possible. Besides, the actors in an ancient play were secondary to the chorus. An ancient dramatist was not spurred on to the elaboration of character by the ceaseless consciousness that the success of his play depended upon those who would judge it by the opportunities it offered for distinguishing themselves. Still, without going beyond Shakspeare, we can find abundant instances of a sense that to exhaust a

situation is better than to analyse a character. It would have been quite worth while to bring out much more fully the decline of Lear's confidence in his daughters and himself. Shakspeare thought it better to concentrate our sympathy on the successive stages of his outward humiliation and the utter misery of the final collapse. Polonius is constantly sacrificed to heighten a situation that is not intended to throw light upon his character. In the scene with Laertes he has merely to occupy the audience; and the question how such a servile old humbug could give such excellent advice in such a good spirit continues to press upon us as among the other riddles of the play with a sense that it was a riddle which Shakspeare hardly cared to solve. In *Measure for Measure* it may even be said that the development of the situation has injured the character of the heroine. In her great scenes Isabella is more interesting, because she is a novice in a very strict and passionate order; and no doubt many who hankered after the old faith were grateful to Shakspeare for this trait, which is not in the novel of *Promus and Cassandra*; but even an ardent reformer might have felt himself defrauded when, without a word of preparation, she marries the Duke; and even Holman Hunt's wonderful picture is hardly enough to compensate for the disappointment.

But if this supremacy of the situation is sometimes too absorbing, it never lasts too long. The number of situations that can be invented is limited, or perhaps we should say, that the power of inventing them is soon tired out by the multitudinous monotony of life. A time comes when all that can be said of traditional situations has been said; if it is possible still to treat the situation ideally, it is necessary to make it intelligible to every fresh generation by a fresh conception of the characters that struggle in it. In the primitive drama fate is character; it is only in the literary drama that character is fate. Or the drama may renew itself by lowering its level and restricting its range. Every time has exciting situations of its own; there are standing situations which go on repeating themselves in new shapes and are always recognizable under altered circumstances. If the dramatist will consent to make his art a form of journalism, these are questions which he can treat more effectively than any other journalist: only he will always have to sacrifice the ideal interest to the rhetorical, the interest of passion to the interest of controversy, and, after all, he will feel that he has confused the issue. Ever since the Restoration—if we should not say ever since the days of Diderot and Beaumarchais—the French drama has supported its unparalleled vitality by keeping to this level. Its predilection for one class of subject is not altogether an accident of French society. Something is wanted to make social casuistry interesting, and this can always be attained, not exactly by rousing the animal nature, but by reminding us that it is there to rouse. The result is an excitement rather more fascinating than playing with a well-fed tiger through the bars of his cage, and perhaps about as dangerous. The lowest form in which the drama can survive is one where it maintains itself by this dangerous interest alone, or almost alone;

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But if this supremacy of the situation is sometimes too absorbing, it never lasts too long. The number of situations that can be invented is limited, or perhaps we should say, that the power of inventing them is soon tired out by the multitudinous monotony of life. A time comes when all that can be said of traditional situations has been said; if it is possible still to treat the situation ideally, it is necessary to make it intelligible to every fresh generation by a fresh conception of the characters that struggle in it. In the primitive drama fate is character; it is only in the literary drama that character is fate. Or the drama may renew itself by lowering its level and restricting its range. Every time has exciting situations of its own; there are standing situations which go on repeating themselves in new shapes and are always recognizable under altered circumstances. If the dramatist will consent to make his art a form of journalism, these are questions which he can treat more effectively than any other journalist: only he will always have to sacrifice the ideal interest to the rhetorical, the interest of passion to the interest of controversy, and, after all, he will feel that he has confused the issue. Ever since the Restoration—if we should not say ever since the days of Diderot and Beaumarchais—the French drama has supported its unparalleled vitality by keeping to this level. Its predilection for one class of subject is not altogether an accident of French society. Something is wanted to make social casuistry interesting, and this can always be attained, not exactly by rousing the animal nature, but by reminding us that it is there to rouse. The result is an excitement rather more fascinating than playing with a well-fed tiger through the bars of his cage, and perhaps about as dangerous. The lowest form in which the drama can survive is one where it maintains itself by this dangerous interest alone, or almost alone;

where the dialogue serves simply as an accompaniment to the make-up and gesticulation of the actors, and, above all, of the actresses; where, in fact, the drama has become a series of *poses plastiques*, in which the æsthetic, not to say the sensuous, element is more important than either the realistic or the sentimental.

It is probable that if we still possessed the works of Agathon and Menander, who seems to have been a far more romantic writer than we should imagine by the timid good sense of his Roman imitator, we should be able to trace how the disintegration of the severe typical drama worked itself out in all these directions at Athens; as it is, we only see what the process was at its beginning, and a reflection, we do not know how pale, of what it was at its end. And certainly within these limits the development of character seems to be the chief agent in the transformation of tragedy. Even in Æschylus, who relies for the most part on the awe of his tremendous situations, we find one play where a single colossal character is developed to a point which transcends the situation so utterly as to make it impossible to imagine an issue which would not be inadequate. Prometheus was intended to be a rebel against the fated ruler of the world; he is allowed to rise into the champion of reason and benevolence against the transitory tyranny of brute omnipotence, which has not even the dignity of being immemorial or everlasting. And when omnipotence has been divorced from omniscience, the conceptions of justice and power become unmeaning together. While the irreconcilable conflict is raging, it is impossible to take any coherent view of the spiritual relations of things. We only feel that Prometheus has grown too great ever to be unbound. In Sophocles, it is not that one gigantic character overwhelms the situation with a burden under which the poem cannot march to a satisfactory *dénouement*, but that the traditional situation breaks down of itself under the requirements of the author's consummate art. In the *Trachinïa*, and still more in the *Ajax* and the *Philoctetes*, we feel that the poet is turning away, consciously or unconsciously, from what he has come to feel was a barbarous age, with something like contempt. The essence of the situation is kept out of sight from one end of the *Trachinïa* to the other, in order that everything may be kept, at any rate, on a footing of conventional grace and decorum, so that a friendly critic can observe that Deianira is the one "lady" on the Greek stage. If she had been jealous of Iole instead of being simply anxious about Hercules, no doubt the subject would have been vulgar. It is not permitted to poets of a refined and fastidious age to handle many primitive legends with entire frankness: the Laureate keeps us to the generosity of Godiva, he does not tell us what she thought of Leofric, nor does he tell us what he thinks. But though the situation in the *Trachinïa* is mutilated, it is not thrown into the background as is the case in the two Trojan plays, where the real interest is thrown exclusively on characters. The subjects of both suggest questions which are at once ridiculous and unanswerable. Why did the Greeks "maroon" Philoctetes

if his wound was curable? if it remained uncured for nine years, how was it that he did not die? What harm would have happened to Ajax when he found out that he had been whipping and killing the flocks and herds of the army, unless indeed he had been excluded for the future from a share of the plunder? A perfect subject never suggests such questions; a great poet never answers them. The real subject of the *Philoctetes* is not whether he shall consent to rejoin the armament which had deserted him, it is whether he shall do so of his own will or be cheated into doing so by Neoptolemus; the real subject of the *Ajax* is not his madness but his deliverance: the poem is a commentary on the dignity of despair. *Ajax* may be compared with *Hamlet*, so far as the mood of the hero rises above the occasion which engendered it; the times are out of joint with both, and their temper finds so much in the world to justify it, that they have not to recur to the original misfortune which first made their situation intolerable; they feel they do well to be angry, and this anger might burn on indefinitely after the spark at which it was kindled had burnt itself out long ago. Only there is one important difference: the first occasion of the wrath of Hamlet is adequate and heroic; the immediate occasion of the despair of Ajax, the disgrace which he cannot forgive himself is simply pitiful and clumsy. It is not the least of the glories of Sophocles that he should have made the hero of a legend only fit for a burlesque the centre of a noble play. In the *Philoctetes* the art is, if possible, more perfect, but the impression which the play leaves is far from being so profound; no attempt is made to approach the hero's character on the spiritual side; of course, compared with Defoe, Sophocles is always an idealist, but after all, Philoctetes is only Robinson Crusoe, with a grievance of which we think little, and a bad leg of which we have to think much. The real problem is how is it possible for a young man beginning life "not to play false and yet to wrongly win;" and the interposition of Hercules suggests the only possible solution—by good luck. Though Hercules reveals nothing but what Philoctetes knew, it is not necessary to apologize for his appearance, since Philoctetes had no choice but to go. As it was impossible within the limits of Greek morality to construct an intelligible justification of a decision which could not be avoided, it remained to gild the submission of the hero by pronouncing with all possible mythical pomp that it was extrinsically right.

In general, it may be said that the tendency of Greek tragedy in its decline to resort increasingly to the assistance of a *Deus ex machina* is a proof, not that the poet was incompetent to manage his situation, but that he had ceased to respect it or believe in it. To cut the knot of a situation, instead of untying it, is, after all, only a way of declaring that the situations of the stage and of life are, in themselves, empty and arbitrary. Euripides, who will hardly begin or end a play without a god or hero, has a strong taste for what may be called abortive catastrophes. In the *Helena* and the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in the lost *Merope* and the *Ion*, the point at which the interest culminates is always this—a tragic blunder is

not committed. It is, at least, a curious coincidence that Scott in his later novels betrays a double tendency to dabble in an unreal supernaturalism and to shuffle out of his story with a series of false alarms. In the works of Scott's prime there is too much of adventure, too much of costume, too much of archaeology, to leave much room for teaching: it is only in what he wrote with failing powers that we approach his real view of life, and then its trials seem to be only a sort of beltane fires, that will hardly burn a steady foot, and which will burn themselves out whether the dancer flinch or not long before the knee has lost its spring. This is certainly the temper in which Euripides leaves us. If any of his situations has a meaning of its own, it is the situation which he repeats till it becomes mechanical, of the victim who dies that the world may be worth others living in, or even because the world has ceased to have anything to give, and to linger on would be *propter vitam vivendi perdere causas*. More commonly, the situation only states an unanswerable question, and though this is done in a way to throw curious side-lights upon life, the whole would simply be an irritating puzzle but for the stimulating stage effects which arise from it, and from the way in which it heightens the distinctive personality of the performers. The situation has ceased to be the mould in which character is fashioned—it remains the furnace in which character is tried. The interest of the *Edipus Tyrannus* depends upon the way in which the situation works itself out; the interest of the *Hippolytus* depends upon the way in which the perfect character of the hero passes through the ordeal, in which the noble character of the heroine breaks down. It is the same in the *Alcestis*, only the parts are reversed, and the development, though less complete, is more complex. In the *Medea*, the situation in itself is stationary, all the movement is in the character of Medea; everything stands still as we watch how ruthlessly and remorselessly she emancipates herself from her circumstances. Nothing is allowed to hinder her: unless she relents, she is secure of her vengeance and her liberty—and we know that she will not relent. It is right that she should make up her mind in public, it is right that she should take all the gossips in Corinth into her confidence. As long as it is possible to take life seriously, anxiety about what is going to happen is a natural and proper motive for a dramatist to work on; but when it is impossible to do this, he had better lay his plots on the stage, and tickle our curiosity as to how he is going to bring about the catastrophe which we foresee must come.

Though Medea is carried to the asylum which she has provided with superfluous forethought in a magic car drawn by two dragons, she is not the less an essentially *bourgeoise* heroine, the centre of a purely domestic tragedy. All the heroic background of the situation is simply used for the purpose of stage ornament. Jason and Medea are neither more nor less to each other for all that they have done and suffered together; not the slightest use is made of the obvious motive that Jason wished to get rid of a wife to whom he owed so much because she was "uncanny." Medea is almost any wife (if she had nursed Jason through

a serious illness she might say all she does say about gratitude), Jason is any husband who chooses to persuade himself that a marriage of caprice is a marriage of interest, and to applaud his own discretion accordingly. We are not to blame Euripides for lowering his subject. He starts with the human interest of the great passion of Medea : when this has expressed itself completely, the subject is complete. But when tragedy has reached this point it is rather an embarrassment than otherwise to go on taking subjects from the heroic age : the embarrassment ceases to be supportable when the passion is not both intense and sustained. The *Andromache* is a very clever play ; but it would have been all the better if *Andromache* had never been the wife of Hector. The play turns on the question of what is the most prudent and dignified course for a wife when opinion tolerates concubinage, and this is admirably discussed ; but it ought to have been discussed in a comedy—Hermione's jealousy does not become tragic in becoming murderous. And yet, in becoming murderous, we feel that it ceased to be comic ; and this points to an almost inevitable limitation of the range of the Greek drama. When it had once placed itself on a level with the interests of daily life, it lost the power of transcending its proprieties. It had to confine itself to discussing with more or less acuteness the commonplace relations between commonplace characters : it could still be lifelike, characteristic, ingenious—it could hardly be original.

In England the theatre never became important as an instrument of discussion. During its most flourishing period the consent of opinion among cultivated men was stronger than it has ever been since. Now and then Shakspeare condescends to talk of some notorious folly for half a scene ; Ben Jonson is fond, as a poet and as a courtier, of girding at the Puritans ; Beaumont and Fletcher, when the action drags, sometimes linger over a conversation on social commonplaces. But so far as the theatre served its great masters for purposes of discussion, it served mainly for the discussion of personal questions. The war of allusions and satirical portraits seems to have raged hotly between poets of all ranks. It is hardly a loss that its traces have become hard to recognize, and that Middleton, and Marston, and Heywood should be the playwrights who busied themselves most with the questions which London life suggested at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Since then the drama in England has been kept under a constantly increasing pressure from all respectable opinion,—it has been forced to avoid disputed questions which could arouse strong feeling, for it has been compelled to be inoffensive, which is hardly the same thing as being innocent. It is characteristic of our manners that it is only in the cynical drama of the Restoration that we find any approach to the comedy of discussion, and then the discussion is of the most superficial kind. But on the whole the disintegration of our classical drama did commence in the development of the dialectical and controversial element with which no drama can dispense altogether. Nor was it the result in any degree of the over development of individual character. Character formed a more important

element of the Elizabethan than of the Attic drama; but it was a stationary element in one, a growing element in the other. One reason for this has been given already; another is to be found in the fact that a Greek play dealt with one point of a story which the audience knew already; an English play dealt generally with the whole of a story with which the greater part of the audience made their first acquaintance when they met it on the stage. Consequently the English drama appeals much more to curiosity than the Greek; we want to know what becomes of the characters, and we want to know what the characters were like, because we have seen them under too many sets of circumstances to be content to identify them with any one. Here, too, the influence of the actors came in; it was not enough to do what had been done upon the ancient stage, to assume a sex, or an age, or a passion; it was necessary, (all the more necessary as the mask had disappeared,) to assume a personality, and the poet was obliged to provide a personality for the actors to assume. If it was necessary for the poet to carry the conception of character far enough to be sufficient for the audience, he naturally endeavoured to carry it far enough to satisfy himself. Besides, the two were in sympathy, and wanted the same thing. This consideration may serve to explain why all the great plays of Marlow, except *Edward II.*, are studies of characters; but then we are tempted to ask how is it that after Shakspeare the characters become more and more shadowy, till in Shirley we have nothing but grandiose puppets modelled on familiar types swaggering with a kind of stilted grace through situations as conventional as themselves? The answer is not far to seek; the development of character was stifled by the same cause which originally had stimulated it; to have carried it beyond the point at which Shakspeare left it would have led dramatic poetry into refinements or extravagances, either of which would have been equally fatal to the production of a telling series of clear and rational stage effects. The contemporaries of Beaumont and Fletcher pleased themselves with the thought that they had brought the English theatre to perfection—that they had combined the rich nature of Shakspeare with the mature art of Jonson. Nor were these eulogies quite unfounded; art continues for the most part to advance for some time after it has begun to dwindle. We may acknowledge that Beaumont and Fletcher made real progress in catching the tone of well-bred society, and in putting a story on the stage in the most animated and intelligible way. If it were necessary to prove the extent of the decline in higher things, which accompanied this superficial progress, it would be enough to observe that while their characters interest, or sometimes even fascinate us, so long as they are on the stage, when the play is over, we take leave of them without regret; they make no more permanent impression upon us than the figures in a magic lantern would if they could talk. But the characters of Shakspeare fill the imagination with a definite abiding presence no less substantial than that which the characters of history impress. The proof is that we are

guilty of the same absurdity with regard to both. We amuse ourselves with thinking what, under different circumstances, they would have been and done; they are so real that we forget that our interest in them really depends upon their being what they are. It only brings out the supremacy of Shakspeare more clearly, to compare his character with the few to which his successors have given an ideal unity. We seem to know Webster's Vittoria and his Duchess of Malfi, and Luke in Massinger's *City Madam*, and Sir Giles Overreach, as well as Macbeth and Coriolanus, and Margaret and Cleopatra. But how much less there is of the former to know; each of them seems to have been made out of a formula, and we are only surprised to see them act as if they were alive, or even to see that they are alive. Luke is really after all only a very superior version of the ordinary stage villain; he could have done nothing, and he would have been nothing, if the incomprehensible tom-cat of an elder brother had not gone away, to see how the mice would play in his absence. Iago was hardly a good character to imitate, even though he was to be varied by a substitution of hypocritical meekness for hypocritical bluntness, but at least Othello was not a fool ready made, Iago had to cheat him. Sir Giles Overreach is simply a contemporary portrait dashed in with great energy, but, after all, only serving to intensify the common obvious view of Mompesson. And substantially the same holds with even such a wonderful artist as Webster. What is astonishing about his creations is the intensity with which they are realized—the fire with which they are animated—not the insight with which they are conceived. The intellectual power needed to portray the "White Devil" is, it need not be said, of a very high order, but it was needed not to understand or explain a very simple character, but to pierce through the crowd of prejudices and conventionalities which made it unintelligible. Shakspeare's study of Lady Macbeth begins where Webster's study of Vittoria ends; and Webster had the advantage of having studied Shakspeare.

It is not worth while to trace the development of character in the English acting drama further. The only remark that it suggests is that Jonson's system of "humours" had more dramatic value than appears at first. When we compare a play like *Every Man out of his Humour*, where a crowd of tiresome oddities jostle to no purpose, we think that the writer has mistaken his vocation, that he ought to have written in imitation of Theophrastus, unless he could have kept to the method of his own tragedies, where the characters are carried just far enough to make the story intelligible, or of his own finest comedies, where a false position works itself out with inexorable logic in a way to cover every character with ridicule. But though the value of stage effect which Jonson underrated, went on increasing, the value of an ingenious plot or a coherent story, went on diminishing. Shadwell, whose one literary aim was to add to Jonson's collection of "humours," was one of the most deserving, and one of the most successful playwrights of the Restoration, and certainly such literary value as the

comic drama of his successors has, depends far more upon the comic types they embodied than on the comic situations they worked out. Miss Hoyden, Mrs. Malaprop, Lydia Languish, Sir Benjamin Backbite, Sir Pertinax MacSycophant are all "humours" in the sense of Jonson : and certainly the *Man of the World* would be nothing without its "humours," and even the *School for Scandal* would not be much.

The study of character in the Shakspearian sense, revives in the literary drama, or perhaps we should say it revives in the literary drama of Germany, it is resumed in the literary drama of England. Thecla, Clärchen, Gretchen ; Wallenstein, Egmont, Faust, seem to be of the kindred of Juliet, and Wolsey, and Hamlet ; only there is something ghostly about them all, they are "sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought," our interest in their development is the greater because we have given up the action to fate ; we feel as if we were reading an essay on the subject, and were grateful and surprised that the poet should have thrown it into the form of a play. Without raising premature and preposterous questions of precedence, we may surely express our relief at the absence of all foregone conclusion in the plays of Mr. Browning, which oddly enough are the least known of the works of an eminently dramatic poet. Strafford is almost exactly parallel to the first part of *Julius Caesar*, in both we have a noble usurper who falls a victim to a noble indignation ; but Shakspeare makes it his business to impress us with the pure tragedy of the fall of Caesar. Mr. Browning is careful to show what Pym thought of Strafford, and what Strafford thought of himself and Pym, and this exclusive preoccupation with character, as what gives the value to action, runs through all the series. It cannot even be said that a play like the *Return of the Druses*, where the development of action and of Djabal's character do unmistakeably interpenetrate each other, is one of the most valuable. It is certainly less characteristic than the *Soul's Tragedy*, where the admirably devised intervention of Ogniben deprives Chiappino of every chance of action and relieves him of all danger of outward suffering, so that we can follow him quite tranquilly through the process which leads him to confess that he is only a petulant poltroon. But the triumph of Mr. Browning's method is to be found in an earlier play ; *Pippa Passes* is nearly the most original experiment of the century in point of literary form, and with all the crudities inseparable from a first attempt, it is only too successful to be fruitful. The heroine passes her holiday in throwing herself in imagination into the idealized life of successive groups of people who, as she thinks, are not concerned with her, nor she with them. On each her passage acts as a touch-stone, at last she all but determines her unknown uncle to a decision which concerns her vitally, yet she falls asleep in unbroken ignorance of what he has to decide. We are content to be left ignorant of his decision. Action has disappeared, situation and character remain : it is the glorified spirit of a disembodied play.

L a u z u n.

THE noble Gascon at the court of the earlier Bourbons enjoyed the advantages and played pretty much the part of the Scotch gentleman at the court of the first Stuart. In a higher degree, however; for the Gascon united the rollicking dash of another race to the shrewdness of the Scot, and was, therefore, a much more brilliant and successful adventurer. Indeed, with their tact and readiness, their craft and daring, their small scruple and large acquisitiveness, their bad French and their good swords—the Créquis, Bellegards, Grammonts, and others from the same quarter, monopolized nearly all the good things that were going, including the strong dislike of one-half of the population north of the Loire. Apropos of this, Tallemant des Réaux tells not a bad story. "Which is the proper term to use, *dépensé* or *pendu*?" inquired a great Gascon seigneur of that authority on correct phraseology, Malherbe. "*Dépensé*" (open-handedness) "is the more Frenchlike," replied the poet; "but *pendu*, *rependu*, *dependu*" (hung, rehung, and well hung) "and all other compounds of that vile word, are most suitable for Gascons."

By far the most remarkable of Gascon adventurers was Antoine Nompar de Caumont. In the course of a long career, which he commenced as Marquis Paygilhém and closed as Duc de Lauzun, he did and suffered such extraordinary things that La Bruyère was fully justified in pronouncing his story more improbable than a romance and wilder than a dream.*

Lauzun, as we shall designate him throughout, was born in 1633. His father, known as the Count de Lauzun, possessed nothing but his captaincy of "The Hundred Gentlemen"—a post which he inherited from his sire and ultimately transmitted to his son. The latter, therefore, had to betake himself betimes to his sword as a means of winning fortune. The opportunity was not lacking, for that was a stirring period. North, south, east and west, battle raged incessant. And from his appointment as cornet to the regiment of his relative the Duc de Gramont (we write the title as the owner wrote it) in 1654 to the next peace, our Gascon was in the thick of it. He distinguished himself on every field, and always on the right side, for his patron was a staunch supporter of Mazarin. So up he went like a rocket, until by January, 1658, we find him Colonel of the "Dragons Etrangers."

* "Sa vie est un roman; non, il lui manque le vraisemblable. Il n'a point eu d'aventures, il a eu de beaux songes, il a eu de mauvais. Que dis-je? On ne rêve point comme il a vécu."—*La Bruyère*.

In the midst of all this tumult, however, Lauzun found time to appear occasionally at court, where he shone no less conspicuous than in the field. He outdared the *Raffinés d'Honneur*—a set of irascibles which all the severity of Richelieu had failed to exterminate; he outshone all the exquisites, though most of them carried estates on their backs; and he squandered as lavishly as though he had been that seventeenth-century equivalent for a millionaire—a Farmer of the Revenues. Though soon to be, he was not yet a royal favourite; besides, he was utterly landless. Whence then came the funds?

Partly from sources similar to that which supplied the annuity of young John Churchill: for, in spite of Macaulay's sneer, the story of the "Handsome Englishman" and the Duchess of Portsmouth is far from being an exceptional one. The haughty Duc de Gramont, for instance, was not ashamed to write, and his equally haughty successor in the family honours was not ashamed to print, that while yet in his teens the said Duc had been "protected" (*le prirent sous leur protection*, says the original) by certain fashionable dames, some of whom undertook to provide him with dress, while others supplied him with money, because— Well, we refrain from transcribing the very frank *because*. It is added that De Gramont played and was "lucky:" the latter term, we regret to explain, being simply the polite equivalent of the day for—cheating. But in this respect also the duke went with his age, for the scandalous gambling anecdotes told of another Gramont by Anthony Hamilton are singular in nothing but their graceful wit. And among the multitudes who were "lucky" as the Gramonts was their kinsman Lauzun.

Lauzun fought at the siege and battle of Dunkirk so brilliantly that Turenne selected him from a hundred other officers of high promise to command in Furnes. As this was an open town within the hostile territories, no higher testimony could be borne to the Gascon's military worth. The ensuing peace transferred him to Paris, where he appeared for the first time in the character of a courtier. And his speedy accession to the command of "The Hundred Gentlemen" (1660) not only secured his new career from interruption, but threw him closely in contact with the monarch. Thenceforward for many a year he outstripped all competitors in the royal favour, becoming probably the only man that Louis ever really liked. Knowing that Louis was in all respects *un grand monarque*, we would naturally conceive that the favourite must have been to a great extent a copy of his stately chief. Nor could we make a greater mistake. Lauzun resembled Louis about as much as the typhoon resembles the trade-wind. "He was a little fair man, with a well-knit frame, harsh features, and a haughty look. He was ambitious, whimsical, envious of everybody, never content, and always in extremes. Though illiterate and unpolished, sullen, solitary and savage, he was yet very noble in all his ways. He could be a good friend when he pleased, but that was seldom. The part of enemy was one more to his liking, and he played it willingly and well. His sword had few equals;

and his tongue was fully as trenchant and pitiless, for he was quick at detecting foibles and skilful in turning them to malicious account. A dexterous courtier, he veered with every change of the royal humour, and was insolent, independent, or servile as the occasion required. To sum him up in three words, he was, as all his actions proved, the boldest, most adroit, and most skilful of men." Thus wrote St. Simon, who knew him well. Bussy Rabutin was more concise, pronouncing him "in body and soul, the smallest man that ever God made!"

Every true courtier of that era was one of a group of three, of which the first personage was himself, the second the sovereign, and the third the mistress. Though very exceptional in other respects, Lauzun was no exception here. While the splendid De Guiche then obeyed every nod of Henrietta of Orleans, while the graceful Vardes was equally subservient to Madame de Soissons, while his Grace of Paris handed about the Bretonvilliers—irreverently known as *La Cathédrale*,—and while a thousand others followed these high examples, the headlong Captain of the Hundred Gentlemen attached himself to a lady charming as any, his cousin the Princess of Monaco. The world saw a good deal of this dalliance at the time, for Lauzun was not the man to hide "his flame" under a bushel. And the little that escaped present notice was fated to eventual exposure, for the lover was one of those curiosities of human-kind who journalize their misdeeds. In his diary he took care to record every wrong he conceived himself to have received from male and female, and the revenge that he never failed to exact. And the precious record fell at length into the hands of some good-natured friends, who did not fail to publish all its choicer morsels.

Lauzun was devoted to his cousin and showed it in a hundred ways. Did she retire from court for a day or two, he was at her side in all sorts of disguises. Her portrait was multiplied round his chamber. He had her effigy moulded in wax and subjected to incantations. And reviving a custom of the previous century, he substituted her likeness for the likenesses of the saints in his "Hours." This fiery passion ended, as might have been expected, in an explosion.

Madame de Monaco happened to engage in a passing flirtation with the King. It need not be remarked that the matter was or should have been a secret. Lauzun by some means caught a glimpse of what was going on, and determined to know the whole. This was no easy matter. Lauzun, however, filled his purse before he went to work, and succeeded. The confidante is no less essential in a flirtation than the principals themselves, and in this instance the confidante was a chambermaid. Like most other people she had her price. A tough one it proved, no less than 3,000 pistoles. Lauzun paid it down without haggling—a fact which sufficiently shows his magnificence and his "luck" at play. In return for his bribe he was conducted to a long passage. The door at the end bore a lock, and in that lock there was a key, while just at hand stood a closet. It was then midnight, close upon the hour of assignation, as the confidante

had good reason to know. So, while the treacherous maid disappeared, Lauzun turned the key, put it in his pocket, and took refuge in the closet. An hour passed, he grew impatient. Another lingered along, and, considering himself "done," he meditated revenge on the waiting-woman. Having devised a suitable one, he was about to leave his hiding-place in order to execute it, when a light step was heard on one side of the door and a firmer tread on the other. "Love laughs at locksmiths," says the adage. It forgets, however, to add that to do so with effect the little divinity should be provided with a few simple implements. Wanting these essentials, Love feels as powerless and looks just as silly on the wrong side of a locked door as the merest urchin that ever meditated a raid on the housekeeper's preserves.

How shall we describe the result of Lauzun's scheme—the fruitless search for the key, the vain efforts to open the door, the puzzled conjectures, the plaintive sighs, and the sad adieus whispered through an obdurate keyhole? We shall not attempt it; we cannot do it. We shall only remark that it was as touching as the discourse which Launce is reported to have held with his dog, and that the traitor emerged from the cupboard with moist eyes, twitching sides, and all the other symptoms of an unfortunate who suffers from suppressed laughter. Going straight to his apartments, he mutilated all the portraits of the Princess, tied them up in a neat parcel labelled with her name and fault, and then packed them away, with other matters of the same description, in the corner, where they were afterwards found, as noticed by Madame de Sévigné.

Lauzun's vengeance, however, was not yet sated. A few nights later Henrietta d'Orleans gave one of those bewitching little midnight parties in the gardens of St. Cloud which Marie Antoinette delighted to imitate long afterwards at the Trianon, and which in neither case led to any particular good. The company gathered to sup in a glade towards the middle of the gardens. Dark trees rose round them, the stars were overhead, torches flashed here and there through the boughs, and music floated from many quarters to the centre of the magic ring. There Louis told a story with all the grace of a Bourbon. Dames and nobles sat round him on the turf, and all was rapt attention, particularly on the part of Madame de Monaco, who lounged towards the verge of the group with one hand carelessly open on the grass. Lauzun marked, and the spirit of mischief took possession of him. He crept noiselessly round, sprang from behind a bush, came down with his heel on the delicate palm, and was off like a flash to gloat over his infantile revenge. For this keen-witted courtier, this haughty noble, this terrible soldier, could be more childish than childhood itself when the fit took him.

With all his contempt for forms and conventionalities, Lauzun displayed a devotion to the person of Louis which seemed to know no bounds. Flattered by the preference of the "noble savage," the King overlooked his oddities and made him "First Gentleman of the Bedchamber." Here Lauzun was loaded with dignities and rich preferments, and he might have

maintained his giddy pre-eminence to the last had he continued "to fight for his own hand" and keep clear of parties. Neither of these things, however, he did. Hardly had he reached a standing-point than he attached himself to a mistress and a party, and, as it happened, to the wrong ones. True, Colbert was an admirable Minister, and La Vallière a charming lady. But the first cared too much for his projects, and the second for her lover, to be very serviceable to mere partisans. The worst people make the surest friends or the bitterest enemies at court. And the other side—that is to say, Montespan and Louvois—were considerably worse than La Vallière and Colbert, and became, as a matter of course, sworn foes of Lauzun. This, however, he did not feel at once, and, perhaps, might not have felt at all—at least, to such an extent—but for the unfortunate fact that the greatest heiress in Europe, who was also a princess of the blood, happened to fall fathoms deep in love with him.

This lady, variously known as the Duchess of Montpensier, Princess of Dombes, *the Mademoiselle*, and the Jeanne d'Arc of the Fronde, was the granddaughter of Henri IV., and, therefore, the cousin of Louis XIV. She had been the subject of no end of marital negotiations in her day, having sought or been sought of one emperor, five kings, and at least a score of sovereign princes. And she had escaped from all with her heart, her revenues—six millions of francs a year—and, more wonderful still for a dame of that era, with her reputation intact, to commit herself irretrievably with a Gascon adventurer—which meant the agreeable compound resulting from the admixture of the braggart and the bully with the beggar. Her passion carried her to lengths seldom attained by modern ladies. She would have Lauzun and no other, and, as she eventually proved, at any price. One is naturally curious to know something of the person of this very singular princess, and it so happens that there exists a characteristic portrait of her in pen and ink, which was sketched by her own fair hands. "My figure," says the Princess, "is neither stout nor thin, but fine and full of grace. My hands and arms are not beautiful, but my neck and skin are perfectly so. My visage is long and well shaped. My eyes are blue, soft, and haughty like my air; my nose large and aquiline, my teeth moderate, hair fair and also curling. My ankle, too, is straight, and the foot pretty. I speak much without talking nonsense or using naughty words (*mauvais mots*).^{*} In disposition I am hasty, wrathful, and a good hater, and then my birth may well intimidate my foes. On the other hand, I have a noble and benevolent spirit, and prefer mercy to justice. I am of melancholy temperament, and delight in solid and useful reading. Trifles annoy me, except verses, which I love, whatever their character. And certainly I am as good a judge of such things as if I were learned."

The courtship of this curious pair is one of the curiosities of history. Unlike every other wild passion, theirs was a plant of remarkably slow

^{*} Mademoiselle was not the only lady of that period who took credit to herself for avoiding the use of "*mauvais mots*."

growth. Its seeds were sown immediately after the siege of Dunkirk, and it took a period as long as the siege of Troy—no less than ten years—to attain maturity. This was not because the lady was slow to show her preference or the gentleman to perceive it. She proved as hasty in this as in other things, and Lauzun, who instantly marked her nascent affection, took care that it should not languish for lack of nutriment. His dash and oddity, as she confessed, were his great attractions in her eyes. And, thenceforth, up to 1670, he was the most dashing madcap in Europe. He provided constant food for curiosity, and kept speculation always on the stretch. It was hard to say which were the more bewitching, his extraordinary freaks, or his really splendid feats. Few people, however, took the trouble to distinguish between them. All that glittered in him was voted gold, and every coin that came from his mint accepted as sterling. To fight, to dress, make love and do mischief, as Lauzun, became the fashion among the men; and to admire these things, and especially their author, the rage among the women. Nor did he neglect other and more particular means for completing Mademoiselle's fascination. He was always haunting and exciting her—sometimes piquing, sometimes pleasing, sometimes absolutely insulting. Then he threw that inflammable material, Heroism, in profusion on the rising flame. Named *Maréchal de Champ* in 1663, he served in that capacity four years later. The trenches were hardly opened before Courtrai, when, heading a desperate assault, he effected a lodgment that brought about the speedy surrender of the town. This was immediately followed by a piece of precisely similar headlong and successful valour at Lisle. And hardly had the latter town fallen, when we find him in the midst of the fiercest cavalry fight of the war; dashing himself among the foe, as Condé hurled his *bâton* at Freybourg: twice taken and retaken; his clothes cut to pieces, his sword broken, and horse after horse slain under him; repulsed again and again, and still again; but always rallying his squadrons and renewing the onset, until at last, taking the foes in flank, he drives them in hopeless confusion and with fearful slaughter from the field. Before these achievements the Princess tottered in heart or head, for her passion at times looked remarkably like insanity. There was nothing wanting to complete Lauzun's character and her infatuation but a dash of misfortune, and that came exactly at the right moment.

The Duke of Mazarin was just as great an oddity in his way as Lauzun himself. Among other strange notions projected or practised, he actually proposed to secure his daughters from the sin of vanity by depriving them of their front teeth! And, in a fit of piety not less absurd, this worthy threw up his numerous lucrative employments, and abandoned the court in 1669. There was a general rush among the courtiers for the good things thus going a-begging, and foremost in the scramble was Lauzun. One situation in particular—the Grand-Mastership of the Artillery—seemed expressly formed for him, and he lost not a moment in petitioning for it. The petition rather embarrassed Louis, for it was absolutely necessary that the War Minister and the Grand Master should

work well together, and everybody knew that Louvois and Lauzun were uncompromising antagonists. Louis therefore hesitated; but he only hesitated. And as this mood, in monarchs no less than in fairer mortals, is the prelude to surrender, Lauzun pressed his suit, and finally gained it, on condition that he kept the secret until it should please Louis to disclose it. This the latter promised to do immediately after the breaking up of the next Financial Council. The day came, the Council assembled, and Lauzun made his appearance in the ante-chamber. There he found Nyert, *premier valet-de-chambre en quartier*, who happened just then to be casting about for some means of conciliating Louvois, whose support he required in a little affair of his own. Lauzun considered his business safe, was not unwilling to make a friend of Nyert, and, besides, longed to indulge in a little Gascon brag; so, in reply to the queries of the usher, he revealed his coming preferment. "The very thing I was looking for," thought Nyert. He complimented the fortunate man, and, while doing so, pulled out his watch. "What!" said he, "so late! But there is still time! A pressing order of the King's," added he, addressing Lauzun; "pray excuse me," and he disappeared. Immediately over the council-chamber was the cabinet of Louvois. Nyert cleared the stairs four at a time, bounced into the cabinet, and apprised the startled Minister in a very few words of what was coming. Never was interruption so unexpected or opportune. Louvois, with thanks, sincere for once, sent Nyert back to his post. Then, gathering up his portfolio under an excuse, he hastened to the council-chamber. Nyert played his part very well. He affected to stop Louvois on the threshold, representing that the Council was yet sitting. "Never mind," said the Minister, thrusting the valet aside; "I have an important communication to make to his Majesty." The King rose on the entry of the Secretary, and withdrew with him to a window. "Sire," said Louvois, "I am aware that you are about to name M. de Lauzun Grand Master of the Artillery. Of course your Majesty is master in all things; but my duty compels me to represent, with all respect, the incompatibility that exists between M. de Lauzun and myself." Louvois went on to enlarge on the manifold evils that must ensue from the contemplated appointment. Louis was greatly annoyed. "The thing is not yet done," said he, resuming his place at the council-board; and Louvois retired, perfectly satisfied. A few minutes later, the Council broke up. Lauzun thrust himself officiously in his Majesty's path, but received not even a look. Twenty other times during the day did he attempt to attract the notice of Louis, but without success. At length, just before the King retired for the night, he ventured to mention the matter. "I see that this cannot yet take place," was the reply. Nothing further passed on that occasion. Two or three days afterwards—probably when he had planned the eccentricity that he considered most likely to move his sovereign—the Gascon audaciously summoned the latter to keep his promise. "Yourself released me from that promise when you broke the condition by betraying the secret," replied Louis. Lauzun glared at his master with as much

scorn as he could throw into very expressive features, and then deliberately turned his back upon him. Next, drawing his sword, he snapped the blade under his heel, swearing, as he did so, that he would never again serve a prince "capable of breaking his plighted word so vilely." The King trembled, grew deadly pale, grasped his cane, and rose. The spectators of this unexampled scene held their breath. But, making a powerful effort, the monarch mastered his wrath, threw his cane through the window, and left the room. "I should have regretted it," said he, "had I struck a gentleman." Then, indeed, did Louis manifest himself "every inch a king!"

Lauzun retired also, but with far less dignity. He wrung his hands, tore his hair, declared that he was ruined, and then, adds one of his sympathizing fellow-courtiers, "whimpered like *un fou*." For a while, the catastrophe looked exceedingly ruinous, for he was arrested next morning and sent to the Bastille. There he let his beard grow, perpetrated all sorts of absurdities in word and deed, and played the madman to some purpose—for a few days. Then he thought fit to resume the sensible gentleman, eulogizing the goodness of the King, regretting nothing but the loss of his esteem, and accusing himself as the sole cause of his misfortune. All this was favourably reported to the King by Guitry, the Governor of the Bastille, who was Lauzun's fast friend. The King soon relented, and a little more. He made up his mind to restore Lauzun to liberty and favour, and to recompense him for his disappointment. The Grand-Mastership of the Artillery had indeed been given to the Count du Lude—that is, given as such things were usually given at the court of the Grand Monarque—for a large sum. To raise the money, Du Lude sold his former post to the Duc de Gevres, and the latter in turn vacated another office. The latter—the Captaincy of the Guards—Louis offered at once to the man in the Bastille, who instantly forgot his new-born humility, and refused with something like contempt. Louis took no notice of this, sent back Guitry to preach prudence, forgiveness, and amiability to his friend. Finally—but not without great difficulty, and only by dint of hard persuasion—he induced Lauzun "to condescend to accept" a renewal of favour and the new post.

Mademoiselle's madness was now complete. To preserve her lover from similar risks for the future, she resolved to marry him; and no sooner had she made up her mind than she proceeded to action with her usual sharp decision. As inequality of rank forbade him to make the necessary advances, she called upon the man of her choice, and, speaking out like a princess of the olden time, fairly "popped the question" herself. Lauzun assumed an air of astonishment, anything rather than the satisfaction which we venture to presume he really felt. "Marry me!" said he. "Me, the domestic of your cousin-german! The thing is simply impossible." "Not at all impossible," was the reply, and thereupon the lady hastened to explain how easily the mountains that stood in the way might be reduced to molehills. "Don't deceive yourself, Madame,"

interrupted Lauzun. "Nothing in the world could induce me to quit the service of the King. I love him too well." "But surely," suggested the Princess, "marriage is not incompatible with the retention of your post. I never understood that the court partook of the nature of a convent." "My duties, Madame, bind me as rigidly as vows," replied this perplexing gallant; "they demand so much of my attention, and confine me so closely to the Palace, that really I cannot see how I could find time to—WASTE ON A WIFE!"

Smack! smack! smack! First on the right cheek, then on the left, then on both ears; for the Princess had a hasty temper and a ready hand, and this was just two hundred years ago. The Gascon's face glowed like the moon through a London fog, and the lady burst into tears. What was the result? An eternal separation? Nothing of the sort. Precisely at the point where it had been broken off, the conversation was resumed by this Princess who never talked nonsense or used naughty expressions, and by this adventurer who recoiled so inexplicably from a royal alliance, six millions a year and half-a-dozen dukedoms.

Lauzun at last consented to be married, but on condition that the wife must always be prepared to give way to the King. "I must attend his Majesty to bed," said he. "I am seldom or never released before two o'clock in the morning, and I must be with him again by eight. The distance between the Luxembourg (the residence of the Princess) and the Tuileries would, as you will perceive, prevent me from being always punctual, and, consequently, I must sleep always at the Palace. But of course I could visit you during the day—that is, ah, when I happened to be at liberty." The answer to this extraordinary speech was just as extraordinary. "Pray don't worry yourself," said Mademoiselle. "You know that I am a constant visitor to her Majesty. You are also aware that her Majesty is very devout. Well, for the future I shall be more attentive to the poor Queen than ever, and when she goes to prayer I can surely find somebody to direct me to your apartment." This closed the oddest courtship on record—for the present.

Having won the sullen consent of her Lauzun, the Princess hastened to the King. Louis was astonished and naturally reluctant to sanction her choice. But he was generous: he entertained little of that animosity towards the Jeanne d'Arc of the Fronde with which he has been credited as yet neither wife nor mistress had succeeded in compelling him to doom his cousin to celibacy, in order that her vast possessions might be secured for their children; and, besides that, his cousin had taken him alone and by surprise. The resolute lady, therefore, was not long in overruling his objections. She next consulted the Queen. "I should rejoice to see you happy," remarked the latter, "but I fear that Louis will never consent." "He has consented," said Mademoiselle, triumphantly. "I am sorry for it," was the rather inconsistent retort. "You would have done so much better by remaining single and reserving your estates for my son Anjou."

The engagement was immediately announced, and the sensation—as

Madame de Sévigné testifies—was absolutely terrific. Lauzun's friends pressed him to hurry the ceremony; but he, whose vanity surpassed his ambition, would insist on taking eight days to prepare.

It was hardly sufficient for himself and his army of decorators. But it was more than enough for the Queen, the Princes, Montespan, Louvois, and the rest of the crowd that hated the Gascon and his surpassing fortunes. Madame de Sévigné tells what followed: "What is called a fall from the clouds happened yesterday evening at the Tuileries. But we must begin a little earlier. Monday the thing was published. Tuesday passed in chatting, wondering, and complimenting. On Wednesday the marriage-contract was drawn up. Partly that the bridegroom might have the necessary titles to be named therein, and partly as a foretaste of the greater goods that awaited him, Mademoiselle presented him with four duchies worth at least twenty four millions. The first is the County of Eu, premier peerage of France; the second, the Duchy of Montpensier; the third, the Duchy of St. Fargeant; and the fourth, the Duchy of Chatelerault. As Duke of Montpensier he was mentioned in the contract, and he continued to bear the title for twenty-four hours. All Thursday Mademoiselle expected that the King would sign the documents as he had promised. But about seven o'clock in the evening the Queen, Monsieur, and a number of busybodies united in remonstrating with his Majesty concerning the great wrong that he was about to do his reputation. So successfully did they plead that Mademoiselle and M. de Lauzun were summoned and forbidden by the King, in the presence of Monsieur, to think more of this marriage. M. de Lauzun received the prohibition with all the firmness, all the submission, all the respect, and all the despair that so great a misfortune merited. Mademoiselle, according to her character, burst into tears, shrieks, complaints, and all the violence of woe." Nor does Madame de Sévigné exaggerate. "When the King announced my misery," writes the Princess herself, "I threw myself at his feet and besought him not to forbid me to marry. 'I have already apprised your Majesty,' said I, 'that I can neither find repose nor work out my salvation if I cannot pass the rest of my life with a man who inspires me daily with fresh tenderness for your Majesty. Take, oh, take my life rather than deprive me of my Lauzun!'"

The reply of Louis deserves to be recorded. It needs neither note nor comment. He said that though he prohibited the marriage, he would not forbid the lovers to meet. On the contrary, he strongly recommended his cousin to consult Lauzun on all her affairs. And he added that in his opinion she could not avail herself of the services of an abler or an honest man. "Eh, well," said she, rising, "since your Majesty approves that I may still regard him as my chiefest friend, I am only too happy." This, be it observed, is her own report. Her contemporaries do not allow that she displayed any such resignation. Madame de Caylus reports, on the authority of her aunt, that she retreated from the Tuileries in a frenzy, went straight to bed and remained there for a week; that, thus playing

the disconsolate widow, she received all comers, who, it may be conceived, were not a few; and that at every fresh arrival she pointed to the pillow beside her, exclaiming, with a plaintive voice, "Alas, his place vacant!" Everybody pitied her—that is, when they had done laughing: for Mademoiselle was no gushing young girl fresh from the nursery, but a matron of the very mature age of forty-three years and seven months, having been born on the 29th of May, 1627.

As for Lauzun, he appeared to be more in favour with his master than ever. The latter had allowed him to retain two of the estates bestowed on him by Mademoiselle; and to these he added many gifts of his own. Some of his monarch's favours, as the government of Berry, the Gascon accepted with customary thanklessness, and others he refused with an offensive frankness that has had few parallels. Louis would have made him Marshal of France, but Lauzun pronounced the dignity despicable unless it had been fairly won on the field, and declined to receive it! For nearly a year he bore himself with a stern and consistent dignity that astonished every one. But cool as he looked, his soul was all on fire for revenge. He knew that his disappointment had been the work of enemies, and he was eager to strike—but whom? Among the throng there must have been a leading spirit, an arch foe; and who was this? Montespan, or Louvois, or both? He determined to ascertain. With this view he paid court for a season to the mistress. And then, when such a thing could no longer look suspiciously out of character, he sought and obtained an interview. Simulating the vassal to perfection, he begged her to assist him with her influence in procuring a certain favour. She promised, and with humble thanks the Gascon took his leave. "Then," says St. Simon, "he took a course which, were it not attested by the whole court and even afterwards admitted by himself, would be perfectly incredible." By a liberal use of gold, he induced a housemaid to conceal him in an apartment where Montespan was accustomed to meet Louis. There he heard their whole conversation; it fully confirmed his suspicions; and he fixed in his memory, not merely the sense, but the very words of the speakers. Then, gliding off without being discovered, he took post at the door. The lady soon appeared and Lauzun offered his hand to lead her to the repetition of a ballet, wherein all the court took part either as performers or spectators. "I flatter myself," said he, with an air full of mildness and respect, "that you have deigned to remember me to the King?" She replied that she had not failed to do so, and composed quite a little romance concerning the services which she pretended to have rendered him. He interrupted her from time to time with questions denoting thorough confidence, which of course encouraged the lady to dilate. At last her invention was fairly exhausted. Then Lauzun's face threw off the simpleton and assumed its dreaded tiger-look, while his grasp tightened on her shoulder and his tongue poured forth a torrent of invective. "You ——!" he grinned, adding an infinity of vilest epithets, and then, with astonishing memory, he recounted every

syllable of her conversation with Louis. Then, muttering fearful threats, he shook her roughly and thrust her into the ball-room, which by this time was crowded. The poor woman staggered through the press and fell fainting at the feet of Louis. "He's surely in league with the demon," was her first remark on recovering. "Who?" inquired the astonished monarch. "Who but Lauzun!" was the reply, and the story was told.

That night the offender was a prisoner. While on his way to the distant fortress of Pignerol, his collection of curiosities, including the diary, was ransacked, with little edification to the world in general, but with a good deal of confusion to many individuals in particular. "And thus," says Madame de Sévigné, "closed the first volume of Lauzun."

"*In secula seculorum*," exclaimed Lauzun, as they shut him up in his dungeon at Pignerol. No choice residence was that. It differed something from the "leads" of Venice, since it was situated at the base of the building; and it was not modelled on the cell of Bonnivard, if the latter were, as Simond describes it, "a comfortable enough sort of dungeon"—for Lauzun was anything but comfortably lodged in his. Like Bonnivard, he had nothing save the chill grey stone above and around him; but, unlike Bonnivard, his cell was low and narrow, and there was no lake without to tinge the rays of light that sometimes entered there with the rainbow hues of hope.*

Unaccustomed as he was to rigorous confinement, the fierce and wayward Gascon soon fretted himself into a fever. The prison surgeon pronounced him in great danger, and recommended a confessor. The prison chaplain came, but the moribund frightened the poor man out of the dungeon, and nearly out of his wits, with his fearful execrations and still more fearful gestures. "If I must confess," said he, "it shall not be to a miserable stipendiary curé, but to a man I can trust. Bring me a capuchin!" A capuchin was brought, and as he leant over the sick man's bed, he verily thought that he had to do with one possessed. "When they introduced him," related Lauzun, long afterwards, "I sprang at his beard, and pulled it well. I then tore off his cowl and had a view of his shaven crown. Not until I had thus ascertained the genuineness of the priest by that of his beard and tonsure, did I venture to entrust him with my secrets." Such a confession as the Gascon's monk seldom heard before or since. "I verily thought," remarked the good father—whose words we put into the nearest corresponding English,—"that I had been confessing three boarding-schools and one lunatic asylum."

Lauzun did not die. In a week he was on his feet, as strong and as mischievous as ever, and almost as cheerful. For the last there was a reason. The walls of this Pignerol stronghold were honey-combed in all directions, but not by the rats. A long succession of state prisoners had pierced numerous passages through the chimnies and under the floors;

* Those who have visited the cell of Bonnivard in sunny weather will understand this.

and by means of these passages the tenants of the dungeons were accustomed to occupy their leisure in all respects—except, perhaps, the edifying conversation—as the Abbé Faria and his pupil. And here we may as well remark that Dumas, who has built up *The Three Musketeers* partly from the memoirs of a real Monsieur d'Artagnan and partly from Lauzun's early career, has evidently laid the prison life of our Gascon under contribution for certain scenes in his longest romance.

Such a man as Lauzun could not have been long in acquiring a knowledge of the secret passages, and nobody used them more frequently than he did. There was hardly a captive in the prison with whom he did not make acquaintance. Among the number was one who had formerly played a great part in the political world—the ex-Minister Fouquet. In his time, Fouquet had embezzled the revenues by the million, and lived the life of a Lucullus. He had been known to give a pension to the inventor of a dainty, ten thousand pistoles for a dinner, and twenty thousand for a smile. Just before his fall he was supposed to be meditating the partition of France between himself and the neighbouring princes, and he was considered fully capable of realizing his design. But Fouquet had changed greatly in the course of his seven years' imprisonment; so greatly as to spend one-third of his waking hours in the accumulation of truisms in a common-place book, which some admiring but injudicious friends published afterwards under the name of *Wisdom*! The remainder of his time Fouquet devoted chiefly to the concoction of eye-water. Never was there a more striking illustration of Shakspeare's remark about "base uses."

During these seven years, time, so far as the world was concerned, had stood still with the fallen statesman. He, too, was aware of the secret passages and made some use of them, but rather as a receiver than a payer of visits. He had heard of Lauzun's arrival, he knew that he came direct from court, and, in spite of his miserable occupations, he was still curious to know something of the chances and changes of political events. We may conceive, then, the pleasure with which he saw Lauzun emerge from his chimney, and the eagerness with which he listened to him. "The one questioned," says St. Simon, "and the other recounted his greater fortunes and still greater misfortunes." Fouquet opened his ears and his eyes very wide when this Puygilhem, this cadet of Gascony whom he remembered only too happy to be patronized by the Marshal Gramont, narrated how he had been general of dragoons, captain of the guards, and even the leader of an army! When Lauzun, however, went on to tell how he had missed the artillery, and afterwards braved the King, his companion began to suspect that he was crazy. But when the Gascon wound up with the story of his marriage and disgrace, the old politician concluded beyond all doubt that he was closeted with a madman, and quaked in mortal terror. Then followed one of the most singular of the many odd scenes in which Lauzun figured. Fouquet betrayed his suspicions and apprehensions; and the Gascon, something in malice but still

more in anger, did his best to heighten them, finally vanishing with a vow on his lips of eternal enmity against Fouquet and his friends, which he lost no opportunity of carrying out. Indeed, a dangerous fire which broke out in the prison some short time afterwards, and by which Lauzun himself ran great risk of perishing, was supposed to have been kindled by him with the charitable purpose of roasting Fouquet.

He lingered ten years in prison, but not so wearily as one would fancy. What with nocturnal visits, tricks on his gaolers, and attempts to burrow his way to liberty, his restless spirit found, not indeed sufficient occupation, but enough to keep it and the body that held it from rusting.

And how went his affairs without? His enemies had deprived him of his offices and their emoluments at a stroke, but they could not deprive him of the Duchy of Aumale and of the County of Eu, which had been legally conveyed to him by the Princess. True, he could not attend to these estates in person; still he had an admirable steward in his sister, Madame de Nogent. This lady was exceedingly like Lauzun in person, and as great a singularity in disposition. She was just as intriguing, spiteful, and wayward, but she had one quality that her brother lacked—consistent prudence in money matters. Herself and her husband had led a very unhappy life—had been even on the point of separating—when a shot carried him off at the crossing of the Rhine, and then Madame de Nogent became at once and for ever the model of a bereaved widow. “I could not very well rejoice with him while I had him,” she was given to observing, “but that is no reason why I should not regret him now that I have lost him. I am sure that I can never more have such delicious quarrels with anybody else, and I can tell you that a downright quarrel is a real luxury to a person of my disposition.” Madame de Nogent, therefore, donned weeds of the deepest dye and most dolorous pattern, which she never threw aside. And though the reality of her woe was doubted, she found, nevertheless, a host of imitators. In one thing, however, she was very sincere—her care of her brother's property. She maintained the best order therein, and put aside his rents as she received them, until, by the time he obtained his release, the aggregate amounted to a handsome fortune.

As to the Princess, she thought of nothing but her Lauzun, bewailing him morning, noon, and night, and never relaxing her exertions to procure his release. Her infatuation, indeed, was more pronounced than ever, nor did the keen wits at court neglect to take the fullest and foulest advantage of it. Montespan had six children soon to be legitimated, and Louis found it rather difficult to provide them with appanages suitable to their rank. In this dilemma monarch and mistress cast their eyes on the wealthiest heiress in Europe, and heartily congratulated each other on her mad passion. Had it been made to order it could not have been better adapted to their purpose. Under its influence she was ready to make any sacrifice for the man she loved. And the man she loved had enough of greed, vanity, and meanness in his composition not merely

to accept, but to exact any sacrifice at her hands. Thenceforward the very Grand Monarque and his grand Montespan appear in the character of anglers, Lauzun being the bait, and the property of Mademoiselle the fish, while all the courtiers stand round ready to aid in drawing the line and landing the prize.

Mademoiselle dared not openly demand the Gascon's release. They had taken care to apprise her that any such course would certainly add to the rigours of his confinement. But she made use of every indirect means. She cringed to Louis, courted Louvois, and was specially attentive to Montespan. The latter was the perfection of that old-fashioned institution—the king's mistress. When the more impulsive La Valliere one day took precedence of the Queen, nobody was more properly shocked at the breach of decorum. "God preserve me," prayed she devoutly, "from such a position as hers. But," she added, "should it ever be my misfortune to fill it, I should certainly know my duty better than to take the *pas* of her Majesty." And when eventually the "misfortune" did befall her, never was it borne with more regard to the proprieties. Montespan, indeed, was admirably fitted for "the little place." She was as clever and clear-sighted as she was charming, and always sinned with due regard to politeness and decency, and, we may add, to her own pecuniary interests. She sympathized with the Princess and breathed a sigh for Lauzun: the story was "wondrous pitiful," she vowed. "But, really now, could you not do something to propitiate his Majesty?" was a question that usually closed the conversation. And to suggest what this something should be, Montespan's amiable progeny made frequent calls on Mademoiselle.

Whether her wits were dulled by her affection we do not know, but certainly the Princess was no longer the sharp-sighted lady that she had been during the lively days of the Fronde, and she took nearly three years to guess the meaning of the mistress. At length she understood what was wanted, and understanding she "spontaneously resolved," as she took care to record, to make the Duke of Maine her heir, on condition that Louis released her lover and sanctioned her marriage with him. Montespan was immediately taken into her confidence and displayed much grateful emotion. "How pleased the King will be," was her final remark, "when you apprise him of this; for of course he cannot guess your intention, and there is nobody so suitable to acquaint him with it as yourself. But mind," she added, "not a word of Lauzun. I happen to know that Louis is nearly as anxious as yourself to see him at liberty; but reasons of state, you know, which however will soon cease to press, forbid it at present."

Mademoiselle had an early interview with the King and made known her spontaneous resolution. Louis was really touching in his acknowledgments. "I perceive," said he, "it is out of friendship for me that you do this. The object of your bounty is yet a child and incapable of winning you by his own merits. I hope, however, that he will grow up

an honourable man and show himself worthy of your esteem. As for myself, I assure you that I shall be only too glad to render you any service in my power."

Months passed, but still not a word of Lauzun. Further, the court visibly changed its manner towards the Princess. Some of its most prominent members neglected, others actually avoided her. Among the latter was Montespan, who was never "at home" when she called. Mademoiselle was evidently in disgrace, but wherefore she could not guess. At length, in six months or so, she was enlightened. At the end of that period Louvois snatched sufficient leisure from his warlike and other cares to pay the Luxembourg a flying visit. Mademoiselle's heart beat quick when he was announced. "Was the morning of her happiness about to dawn at last?" she asked herself. "Was Lauzun about to emerge in triumph from the ministerial carriage?" The reply to these queries soon approached in the very handsome person of Louvois. "The King is greatly displeased with you," said the Minister. "Why do you delay to fulfil the engagement which you made with him the other day?" "My engagement!" "Yes, you promised, as you cannot but remember, to bestow your estates of Dombes, Aumale, and Eu on the Duke of Maine." "I did nothing of the kind," retorted the Princess, greatly astonished. "Oh," remarked Louvois, coolly, "if you choose to play fast and loose with your sovereign in that way, I have nothing further to do—except to make my report." And the very proud statesman withdrew from about the meanest piece of work that even he had ever undertaken.

In vain the Princess protested that she had never dreamt of doing more than making the Duke her heir. The King said otherwise, and everybody echoed the King. Such remonstrances as "Oh, Mademoiselle, how could you do it?" met her from every eye, and from as many lips as dared pronounce the words. Still she declined to be persuaded or intimidated into distrusting the evidence of her senses.

Additional months flew by, and a good many of them. The court had no desire to spoil things by precipitation. It could likewise afford to wait, which the Princess could not. At length the time came for another move in this all-important affair. Then Mademoiselle was quietly informed that time enough had been granted her wherein to attain a proper state of mind, that the King's lenity had bounds, and that, in short, did she still persist in her obstinacy, Lauzun should at once be transferred to the Bastille and treated with condign severity. The Princess wept, shrieked, threatened, complained, and finally consented to give up her lands.

Something more than her consent, however, was necessary. Two of the three estates were the property of Lauzun. In earlier ages this would have mattered little. But the French laws had thriven on the ruins of feudalism; and now that their own right hands were no longer capable of maintaining them against all comers, the French nobles had acquired much respect for these laws. Lauzun, therefore, was not now to be put out of the way by any of the old summary and sanguinary methods.

Neither could his signature be won from him by means of torture, for the law attached not the slightest value to contracts formed under restraint. He must be at liberty to make a valid renunciation of his property; and everybody knew that were he at liberty no such renunciation could be wrung from him. Here lay a great difficulty: that is, to unlegal minds. A shrewd jurist, however, was forthcoming who quickly drove the royal coach, without let or hindrance, over this apparently insurmountable obstacle. This was how the thing was done:—A report was spread that Lauzun's constitution was beginning to give way. Then the court physician made a journey to Pignerol. His experienced eye detected disordered digestion, impeded respiration, and a hundred other tokens of incipient disease, where nobody else could see aught but rude health. The sufferer was ordered forthwith to visit the baths at Bourbon. Thither he went attended by a formidable array of archers. And there he met Madame de Montespan. For, by a singular coincidence, one of her darlings had been ordered at this time to take the Bourbon waters, and, of course, the fond mother must necessarily accompany her child. A good deal of negotiation ensued between the pair. The gentleman, however, was neither to be wheedled, overreached, nor intimidated; so, after a decent time, he was relegated to his prison, while the lady returned in high dudgeon to Paris.

But neither Montespan nor her royal friend were the people to allow their plot to founder in sight of port. There was still another resource. Madame de Nogent was consulted and gained over, in a great measure by apprehension for her brother's safety should the court be driven to use harsh measures by the failure of all milder ones. This lady paid a visit to Pignerol, and, in consequence of what passed at this visit, Lauzun was ordered a second time to the baths. There, in the autumn of 1680, he again met Madame de Montespan, and made a legal transfer of the estates in dispute. That very same time he received two other estates—together worth 40,000 francs a year—from the Princess, remarking, with his usual graceful gratitude, that they were hardly worth the trouble of accepting.

The confederates waited until the spoil was secure in their possession, and then came forth two royal orders. The first confined Lauzun to the provinces of Anjou and Touraine; and the second forbade the Princess ever to marry him. "But," said Montespan to the Princess, "that need not prevent a private marriage. Indeed, I am at liberty to assure you that you may take that course with perfect safety. Louis will not only shut his eyes to it, but, further, if anybody ventures to remark about it, I undertake to say that the busybody shall meet with treatment sufficient to silence all such people for the future." "But, my honour! What will people think of me?" exclaimed the Princess. "Oh, as to that," retorted her mentor, "what need you care while love and conscience are equally satisfied? Believe me, you will find things quite as pleasant as though you had been wed with all the pomp and publicity in the world. Besides, M. de Lauzun is sure to like you all the better on account of the mystery."

That Mademoiselle followed the advice of the mistress there is good

reason to think : Marshal Berwick, among others, declares that she did so. The strongest proof, however, ceased to exist in 1750 or thereabouts. This was an elderly lady living unostentatiously at Treport on an income of 1500 francs a year, whose source she could never learn. It was whispered in the neighbourhood that she was the daughter of the Princess. She herself appeared to credit the story, which neither her face nor her figure belied ; for in both particulars she bore an extraordinary resemblance to the Jeanne d'Arc of the Fronde.

The Princess hastened down to the man for whom she had sacrificed so much. " But," says Madame Fiesque, her chief attendant, " Lauzun, while at Eu, would persist in low amours. The Princess discovered this, was furious, marked him with her nails, and ordered him out. I conveyed the order from the Princess, who stood at one end of a long gallery, to M. de Lauzun at the other. No sooner had I delivered my message than down he dropped on his knees, and in this posture scrambled along the gallery to the feet of my lady, who instantly forgave him." Many similar scenes followed, each more stormy than the other ; " for, tired of being beaten, he treated her in turn " with what our French authority actually terms " marital licence."

Lauzun's one wish was to shine again at court. For a while the Princess seconded his efforts to realize it, with great vigour and some little success. In five years' time she shamed Louis into releasing him from all restrictions except that which forbade him to appear at the palace ; and it was his own fault that she did not ultimately relieve him from this. But once in Paris, he resumed all the fierce dissipation of his wildest days, rendering himself especially notorious for deep and successful play. He displayed such conspicuous ingratitude and infidelity to his benefactress that they had one last tempestuous quarrel and then parted for ever, in 1687.

Shortly afterwards, Lauzun obtained permission to visit England, where gaming was the rage. There he remained until the revolution, when he returned to France with the wife and child of James II. Having displayed much dexterity and courage in this matter, he was rewarded with a command in the Irish expedition, but did nothing worthy of his ancient renown. On his re-appearance in France, he was created Duc de Lauzun and admitted to the court, where he was allowed a good deal of licence, but none of his former influence.

Mademoiselle died in 1693, and Lauzun went into mourning. This, however, he soon threw off to marry a very young lady of the family of Lorges, who eventually survived him. The long remainder of his life he spent in wealth and ease ; but the great fortune that he really had achieved could not prevent him from lamenting to the last the still greater fortune that had slipped from his grasp. These regrets he mixed with many specimens of his ancient waywardness and childish malice. For instance, on one occasion he terrified his relatives by putting on a dying look, and pretending to make a will in which all his property was

bequeathed to the poor. And, on another, he induced an officer of high rank, who was simple enough to accept him as an authority on such matters, to make himself ridiculous by appearing at a grand review in a uniform that might have been "the thing" four or five hundred years before. But his chief delight was to tease the Curé of St. Sulpice with magnificent promises for his church, which he retracted one day to renew in grander form the next. Having swung the poor clergyman thus between hope and fear for a good many years, he ended by giving him nothing whatever.

"Lauzun," says St. Simon, "had an iron constitution. He ate much, often, and of everything without inconvenience. Shortly before his last illness, that is to say in 1722, he still delighted to amuse himself with fiery horses. He might have been seen repeatedly at the age of eighty-nine backing a ragged-looking, unbroken colt, and prancing about before the whole court, which could not but admire his dexterity and the firmness of his seat." The malady that carried him off was a cruel one—cancer in the mouth. He bore his sufferings with admirable patience, made no complaint, showed no temper, and gave way to none of those outbursts which had so often rendered him insupportable even to himself. He passed his time in pious reading and edifying conversation, shut up with his confessor. Only a few others were admitted. When this privileged few made their calls they found nothing lugubrious or gloomy, and hardly any token of suffering, in Lauzun. On the contrary, he was all tranquillity, politeness, and sustained conversation. But he^s was neither very animated nor at all curious as to what was passing in the world. He spoke with difficulty; indeed it was easy to see that he exerted himself only for the sake of the company. He made no attempt, however, to preach morality, and never referred to his malady. This uniformity,—so courageous, so peaceful, and so difficult,—he maintained for four months. And he died in 1723 at the age of ninety.

Patrick O'Featherhead's Watch:

A DATELESS STORY.

I.

ON that sunny morning in question young Patrick O'Featherhead, who had been but six months in London, took a most painful resolution: he determined to hang himself.

Now, being a long-headed young Irishman, he had not arrived at this resolve without giving the matter much thought; but thought had only strengthened him in his purpose instead of dissuading him from it. He had no money; he had applied in vain for a loan to Peter Flint, Esq., his father's friend and his own ex-guardian; some poems and tragedies which he had written had been refused, with a great deal of unanimity, by all the editors and managers in the metropolis; and to crown all, Milly Wood, his landlady's daughter, whom he had purposed to marry as soon as his unpublished writings should have secured him a settled income, had told him categorically that she preferred to him one Mark Quill, who had a place under government, and sealed letters concerning the public weal, at a salary of 90*l.* per annum. Assuredly there were reasons enough here to twist the rope with which young Patrick meant to put an end to his miserable existence; and, in truth, Pat was of opinion that no clearer case for self-suspension had ever been made out. And yet it is sad to hang oneself at twenty. Life at that age, even when considered from the stand-point of a Battersea lodging, and from the midst of rejected manuscripts, has charms which plead most eloquently for a prolongation of lease; and when young Patrick had finished and closed the two letters, which began respectively, "Cruel Milly! darling, when you read this I shall be no more" and "Stony-hearted Mr. Flint, know, on perusing these lines, that it is your inhumanity which has killed me. . . ." he sat down to consider for a moment whether there were not in the catalogue of wilful deaths some less abrupt and displeasing than the halter. This led him to remember that people who had been rescued from drowning spoke favourably of that mode of exit from the world; but then there was a two or three minutes' preliminary gargling which was not delightful. Something might be devised exempt from gargling. In a French novel he had read of a Persian herb called *hatchis*, which wafted one to other spheres on the wings of dreams most opalized and intoxicating; but then there was no Persian chemist in Battersea, and such native apothecaries as there were obeyed the law most subserviently on the subject of poisons, refusing to sell one so much as a thimbleful of opium

without a prescription from a doctor. Dismal irony of legislation, that it should need a physician's aid to forsake this life! Young Patrick wished he had studied to be a medical man, for then he might have drugged himself lethally on a prescription of his own; but, failing that, he regretted having quarrelled with his friend Thaddy Boles, the medical student, whose candid opinion he had solicited on a poem of his, and with whom he had been at silent feud ever since that candid opinion had been given. In anxious mood he deliberated as to whether he should insert the barrel of a pistol between his teeth, and then draw the trigger, but he had no pistol; then he mused on the idea of firmly plunging a dagger into his heart, but he had never liked daggers; finally he thought of the plan adopted by jilted milliners who block up all the air apertures in their room, light a charcoal fire on a portable stove, and then lie down on their beds to doze off comfortably into suffocation. But to do this it would have needed to know exactly the amount of charcoal requisite, also the portable stove; and when both these desiderata had been compassed, it would have further required that young Patrick's room should have been less ventilated by windy chinks than it was. On the whole, after giving the matter his most weighty consideration, he saw there was nothing for it but to hang or drown, and he tossed into the air the only coin that remained to him, a sixpence with George III.'s un-Irish face on it, to decide which of the two it should be. The coin fell heads, which meant hanging. So young Patrick took up his hat, and prepared to go out to buy the rope and necessary nail.

But first he proceeded to nerve himself for his task by uncorking the last of six bottles of wine which his now obdurate, but once friendly guardian, had given him in more liberal days. The wine was of amber-colour Rhine vintage, very old, and full of aroma. It sparkled in the glass like liquid topaz, and Patrick O'Featherhead could not restrain a grim smile as he noticed on the bottle's label, "Elixir of Long Life," "for," thought he, "this once at least, i' faith, here's a trademark that's a'loying." Nevertheless the wine cheered him, and sent the blood flowing in quicker pulses through his veins. As he held it up to the sun that luminary seemed to be shooting golden arrows through it, and flecks of light danced over the surface like vinous will-o'-the-wisps. Pat's tumbler was a large one, but he replenished it thrice, and each time the wine seemed to tinkle in his ear as it rippled out gaily from one receptacle into another, "Elixir of larng loife to ye, Patrick O'Featherhead, elixir of larng loife." The joke seemed so good to Patrick O'Featherhead, who was not devoid of Irish humour, that he was in fair spirits as he marched down the staircase on his way to the roper's.

It happens that ropers are scarcer than other tradesmen, so that Patrick O'Featherhead did not find one in the street where he lived. He walked out of it, going straight before him and threading his way through the mid-day throngs of Battersea, like a man who is quite free from cares of any kind. There were costermongers, dusty policemen, sun-scorched

workmen building semi-detached villas, small children carrying home large quart pots to help fuddle their parents, draggle-tail women on the trudge to the pawnbroker's,—and Patrick eyed these poor wretches as if he pitied them from the bottom of his heart, at being doomed to continue a life of struggling from which he himself would so soon be relieved. What, indeed, were heat, dust, trouble, and pawnbrokers to him now? In an hour he would be so far remote from these things that if all the poverty and grief of Battersea were to come and wail in his ear they would be powerless to wake him. So he walked on with a certain buoyancy, proud at being so much superior to all grovelling bodies, until, looking up, he perceived opposite him an oil and colour shop with coils of rope set out very neatly in the window.

Now Patrick was unshakable in his resolve; but it would be a blinking of facts to deny that at sight of these ropes a creeping sort of sensation stole unexpectedly up his back. The fact is, the ropes appeared to him so much stiffer than any which he had figured in his mind's eye. Stark ropes they were, of the cleanest hemp, uncompromisingly new and bleached as if with pipe-clay. There was no chance, mused Patrick, of any such ropes breaking; and this propelled him to a train of thought which he had hitherto avoided, but which now imposed itself upon him with some insidiousness—namely, what sort of hubbub would there be in the house upon the discovery that he was hanged? It was probable that the thing would not be discovered for twenty hours, perhaps longer. Then he would be missed, and somebody—perhaps Milly Wood herself—would run upstairs and knock briskly at the door to ask if there was anything the matter with him. No answer. A pause. Then the door-handle would be turned, and Milly would behold him suspended by the neck, his head sunk on his chest, his fingers stretched out splay-wise, and his boot-tips making ineffectual attempts to kiss the floor. Upon this, a horrible alarm! Milly would shriek, rush down the staircase, and faint. Mrs. Wood and the housemaid would bolt out into the street to scream for policemen; the next-door neighbours would open their windows and look out. A crowd would collect round the area railings; a doctor would elbow his way through it, be led upstairs, cut him down, and feel his pulse; and in the evening papers would appear a ten-line paragraph headed:—"Distressing Suicide at Battersea." Then, on the morrow, a dozen of local grocers and bakers would find that he had committed self-destruction whilst in a state of temporary insanity; and in years to come, when Milly had married Mark Quill and his 90% a year, he, Patrick, would be the staple phantom of fire-side stories, growing each year more descriptive and sensational. Milly would tell, in impressive language, how she had seen him dangle, pale as a ghost, with the tongue out of his head; and Mark Quill would point a moral to the tale by repeating each time, "I always thought that chap was a crazy one."

Patrick stood still, removed his hat, and wiped his brow. All this was not pleasant. To hang was well enough; but to hang and be perpetuated

in the memory of Mark Quill as an imbecile was not quite what Pat had contemplated. There should after all be some glory in a sudden death. Milly should be made to retain such a recollection of the tragic occurrence that in moments of conjugal dispute she should always be tempted to exclaim, "Ah, Mark, you're not the brave man that Patrick was!" Yes, but how manage that? A Battersea breeze was blowing soft clouds of peppery dust into Patrick's face and hair, and this seemed to stimulate his thoughts as incense or snuff are supposed to do. Why was there not some war where he could go and join a forlorn hope, and fall covered with powder—and fame? Why did not some Battersea bull go suddenly mad, plunge through the streets, and furnish him with the triumphant opportunity of being gored whilst saving some Battersea coster-woman. Why did not something explode somewhere and shoot him skywards holding a street-child in his arms, who should escape unscathed? Why . . . but here he stopped. The distant strains of a military band had fallen upon his ear, and, turning round he saw, as yet no clearer than specks, a line of gold and scarlet coats advancing amidst a crowd of ragamuffins.

A man who is going to hang himself may be pardoned for wishing to hear a little good music before he dies. Patrick was still standing opposite the oilman's, having only the road to cross before reaching the shop. He resolved that he would cross when the last soldier had passed; and he stepped back a yard, the better to see and hear what was coming. The band's music grew nearer, the red coats flashed brighter in sight; and it was a genuine band, that of a battalion of the Queen's Guards returning to Chelsea Barracks. Closer they came, all aglow with colour, the sappers to the front; the drum-major next with gold corded stick, then the bandsmen, the fifes and drums, the Colonel on his charger, and the battalion behind with rifle-barrels gleaming in the sun. Crowds seemed to start up from everywhere on the path of these showy heroes, and the two sides of the road were soon packed; whilst the many-shaped instruments of brass, the cymbals and drums continued to clash and sound until the brilliant vision lessened again into a line of specks and vanished.

But it had not vanished without working a change in Patrick O'Featherhead. His brain was now boiling over after this music with dreams of glory, and for the second time he removed his hat as one may do a saucepan's lid when there is too much bubbling underneath. Hanging had disappeared from his plans; he felt born for higher destinies. He would sacrifice his life to the promotion of some great discovery in science. He would mount a balloon; experimentalize with fulminating-silver, dive down a mine to breast the choke-damp, volunteer to go to the North Pole—do anything that could take him rapidly from this globe with an abstract crown of laurels round his head. So, full of such noble purposes and with his brain in a whirl, he set off running at full speed in the direction the soldiers had taken. He wished to hear more of the music which had so inspired him, and after jostling and being sworn at by not a few of the ragamuffins who swarmed round the band, he took an advantageous place

among them, and walked gesticulating and soliloquizing abreast of the bandmaster, who privately put him down for a lunatic. In this way did he reach Chelsea, which is a joyous suburb enough, and where the first thing that he set eyes on after accompanying the guardsmen to their very barrack gate, was a mountebank who had laid a carpet in the middle of the road, and was preparing to climb a pole which a second mountebank balanced on his stomach, a goodly concourse of spectators being gathered to watch this sight.

The music had ceased. Patrick eyed the mountebanks and said aloud to himself in the rich Hibernian that was peculiar to him whenever his mind was much excited, though it is to be noted that he was a youth of good education : "Noo, by the power-rs, it's jist arltogether as if they'd been brart here for meeself," and approaching the mountebank who balanced the pole on his stomach, he asked him "for jist foive minutes loan of that carrpet to make a spaich on." The mountebank, who favoured any project that was likely to bring a greater concourse round him, kindly consented for a consideration of twopence. Patrick handed him his sixpence, received fourpence in return, took his place on the carpet and thus delivered himself : "Leddies and jintlemin, and other-r payple of arll sexes, it's as good as a did man that ye see befor-re ye. But prayvious to doying I'd be afther committin' some great action for the porrpose that I shouldn't lie starvin' in my carfin for want of a wor-rd of praise, which is mate and dhrink and nourishmint to the soul. Marcus Cor-rtuis, whom every mother's son af ye's read of, jist set his horse at a pit, no more nor less, and saved his counthree. If there were a pit here, my horse should go after Marcus Cor-rtuis's :—though I haven't a horse—bad luck to the picareen if he wouldn't! So I'm jist for telling any jintleman here that if he wants to lave a name to his discendants by invinting an invintion that'll blow up the man that first tries it, let him only spake the wor-rd, and I'm the man that'll be blown up."

The Chelsea public laughed good-naturedly, regarding this speech as a fitting preface to the tumbling entertainment; and one of the mountebanks improved the occasion by going the round of the circle with his hat. Patrick O'Featherhead continued his speech, and added to its impressiveness, but, seeing at last that the laughter in no way diminished, and being further reminded by the man with the pole that his five minutes were up, with other five minutes besides, he opined, with some contempt, that the inventive spirit must be absent from Chelsea, and so withdrew from the carpet to seek for a less benighted locality. He had scarcely, however, passed though the ring of spectators who made way for him, smiling, to right and left, than he was confronted by a curious man, dressed in black, whom he had observed watching him from a little distance.

"Were you in earnest just now?" asked this individual, fixing on him a pair of mysterious and searching eyes.

"You may file an affidavit to that iffect in the Cart of Queen's Binch," answered Patrick positively, and stopping.

"You mean to say that you are prepared to sacrifice your life immediately to any new and great invention?"

"I'll sacrifice it even if the invention's not a new but an ould one, by St. Patrick!"

"Well, then, follow me."

II.

"Where do you live?" inquired the stranger after the two had got clear of the more frequented streets.

Patrick O'Featherhead told his name; and, upon the stranger then inquiring for an outline of his history, and of the causes which had brought him to plan suicide, Patrick furnished this, too, with no stint of details or philosophical reflections. He expatiated on his struggles, his baffled hopes, his love. He drew a picture of Milly Wood, and cursed the base soul of Mark Quill, the clerk, "from the heels of it to the head." Being next asked by the stranger whether he knew anything of electricity or magnetism, he replied that he took an interest in both, and had read that very morning, to while away his time, a book on phenomena—"by the same token that it made the hair of me stand," added he.

The stranger stood still, and again examined Patrick with an air of deep scrutiny.

"I am an inventor," he said at length, and as though hesitating. "But as my invention can be tried as well in your lodgings as in mine, and as your dead body, in case of a fatal result, would be an encumbrance and a danger to me, I propose that we go to your residence."

"And where's the invention, thin?" asked Patrick, quite untroubled.

"In my pocket," answered the man.

It did not take long to reach Patrick's lodgings, but on the way, an inexplicable sensation possessed him. It seemed of a sudden as though his smileless and sphinx-like companion had obtained occult rule over his powers of thought and movement, and thus numbed his brain whilst depriving him of the ability to walk. He tottered and would have fallen but that his companion caught hold of him and linked his arm within his. Then, though he tried to combat the treacherous magic or magnetism that was paralyzing him, he could remember no more till he found himself seated in a chair in his own room and his companion looking at him fixedly from the other side of the table.

Patrick fancied that the deceiving stranger had taken unfair advantage of him and commenced the experiments without warning. He essayed to speak, but his tongue produced only inarticulate sounds. He closed his eyes and threw himself back in his seat. Then this is what the stranger did and said:—He produced a small copper chain adapted to go round the neck, and from somewhere else a copper dial, rather like a watch, and placed these two apart at distant points of the table; then he began slowly:

"These are my inventions; they are the work of a life-time, but may, perhaps, destroy life in an instant—that is what remains to be seen. The

dial will give to the man who uses it such power over his fellow-men, that there would be nothing on earth, save health and strength to use it, left to wish for. But the dial can only serve in conjunction with the chain, which completes its force, and the combined might of the two is so great, that any man wearing them linked together without the amount of bodily electricity necessary to counteract their effects on his own organization might be struck dead where he stood. I know I have not the bodily electricity required. I am lymphatic, and it is a man of nervous and sanguine temperament that is needed. Years have been spent by me in endeavouring to find such a one who would consent to undergo the experiment, but until fate threw me in your way to-day I met nobody with courage or despair enough. You are still firmly resolved to brave death ? ”

Patrick, whilst conscious of the question, felt that he had been by some process cheated out of the power of opposing a negative to it. He uttered a kind of moan, and sought vainly to lift his hand to his eyes and open them ; but his arms hung to his sides like lead.

“ You say, yes,” remarked the stranger, in a calm tone. “ Well, in less than five minutes you will tower as a king above men, or be out of your misery.”

He took the chain, and advancing to where Patrick sat, threw it over his neck. Patrick shivered from head to foot as if in an ague. Three times the spasms recurred to him in twice as many seconds, and seemed as if they meant to wrench the life out of him. Then he became still again.

“ Now listen,” said the stranger, seizing his right hand and directing it towards the dial. “ This dial fastened to the chain will—if you are not killed by the shock—cause you to exercise a magnetic and irresistible fascination over any human being towards whom you point one of these needles. You see there are two of them, as in a watch. If you employ the smaller one you may compel any man to do or say the exact contrary of what it was his disposition to do or say : if you use the longer needle you may oblige a man for so long as its point is turned towards him, to speak the truth. To explain the former of these two powers you have only to recollect that the human mind is a debating assembly, where the good and bad instincts, the wise and foolish, the noble and mean, deliberate upon every act of a man's life. In the case of an honest man it is the good instincts that hold what we call a parliamentary majority : in that of a rogue it is the contrary. But just as in living assemblies you see adventurous minorities occasionally carry a snap vote ; so in the mind, the instincts that are usually in the ascendant will now and then be so unaccountably overpowered by the others that a good man will be seen to act like a brute, a rogue perform deeds of touching generosity, a wise man comport himself as a fool, a fool give evidence of the shrewdest sense. This is a revolutionary state of things, and it will be the function of the small hand, to conjure it up at your pleasure. As to the power of the larger hand, its secret lies in this, that truth is the major virtue which may be said to comprise all the others : and which men practise instinctively

in a state of nature. Then comes civilization, which, with an infinity of dykes called expediency, courtesy, conventionality, or better still, with one big dyke termed caution, stems in truth on every side, so that when men attain to the highest point of civilization they shrink from telling the truth about one another as they would from a crime. Now this large hand, acting upon the brain by an invisible fluid, will entirely upset in men's minds the instinct of caution, so that their tongues will wag unrestrained, and let out all that is in their hearts. You have understood me? . . ."

The stranger receded a step and made an authoritative motion to Patrick to take the dial and fasten it to the chain. Patrick, writhing in his chair, as though with feeble resistance, obeyed mechanically. He touched the dial, and at the same moment the torpor fell from him. He bounded to his feet as if galvanized, and clutched the dial with all his might and main, the sensation being one as if the dial were stuck to his fingers and could never be torn from it. Flushed in the face, panting and tortured in the body, as if a million of needles and pins were pricking him, he staggered about the room making spasmodic attempts to hook the catch of the chain to the dial's ring, and, pausing in his efforts, to thump his hand on his breast, which heaved as if it were going to burst. At length he succeeded, and then of a sudden an ineffable sensation of comfort stole over him. He stood still, with a smile on his face, threw his head back and closed his eyes from the exquisite rapture of what he felt: "Oh, this is heaven!" he murmured.

"Ah!" shouted the stranger, exultingly, "you have prevailed. The secret of men's minds, wealth, power, dignity, are all within our reach. We have grasped omnipotence!"

"I feel as if I had wings," sighed Patrick, ecstatically. "Air, air! I could fly!"

"The whole world is before us," cried the stranger. "Come!" and the two rushed down together out of the house.

III.

How he had got there he could not tell, but Patrick found himself in the most crowded centre of London with his new friend on his arm. Carriages flashed by in hundreds, men streamed along the pavements, the trade, fashion, and wealth of the greatest and proudest city in the world passed before his eyes as an ever-changing and eternal panorama. He did not speak, but felt exultation thrilling in all his veins. He looked up, and at a distance before him saw a mighty and well-known building reflecting its august spires and towers in the Thames:—"Westminster," he murmured; "Westminster, which has given laws to half the world."

"Yes, and we can try our power here," answered his companion, who, like himself, looked full of excited joy. "We may as well spend a day in experimenting our talisman; to-morrow we will begin to make it serve our interests."

Patrick had not yet tried the efficacy of his dial. He now drew it

from his pocket and glanced about him for somebody on whom he could test it. There was standing on the opposite side of the street and just in front of a butcher's shop a chubby policeman with the most honest face in the world, all beef and truthfulness. Patrick moved the small hand of his dial towards this excellent officer so as to make him do the one thing of all others that he had least meant to do. The policeman gave a start, and without a moment's hesitation faced round, strode up to the butcher's shop, unhooked a leg of mutton and walked off with it.

The butcher perceiving the theft rushed to the doorstep, with the blood to his face, and prepared to shout, "Stop thief!" but Patrick, directing the small hand anew, caused *him*, too, to do just the one thing which was most contrary to his nature. A smile broke on the butcher's face, and he sang out:—"You're very welcome to that leg, policeman. It's not often I give any one something: the sensation 'll be a new one."

Patrick felt curious to know more of this gentleman who confessed to so ungenerous a disposition, and he turned the large hand towards him so as to induce him to proceed with his avowals. The butcher forthwith lapsed self-accusing:

"Ah, yes!" he bellowed at the top of his voice, and with a most splendid disregard of the crowd who began to gather: "you may well walk off with that leg, and if you was to take every blessed scrap of meat that's in the shop, you'd still not have got a hundredth, ay nor a thousandth of what I've come dishonestly by in the course of my precious business. It 'ud make you stare, and no mistake, if you was to hear of the extra pounds of meat that I've set down to my rich customers, and of the lumps of bone and gristle that I've put into the scales in weighing the meat for the poor; and of the diseased carcases I've bought underhand for a few shillings and sold in joints for twice the number of pounds. Why, just see that leg of beef a-hangin' up there. It's all that remains of a tainted old cow that I wouldn't have fed on myself if you was to have paid me its weight in gold for it; well, I doctors it a bit with an acid which my neighbour the chemist knows of, and away it goes at a shilling the pound to customers, who don't much notice that the fat's too yellow and the lean too dark, and give themselves indigestions fit to fill a hospital with. . . ."

Patrick laughed, but fearing the honest butcher might go to lengths which would hopelessly ruin his good name, he turned the dial towards a sleek grocer who was standing on his doorstep and enjoying his neighbour's confession with a smile of the purest delight. The grocer immediately pressed his hand to his forehead and yelped:—

"That what he's saying there is all very well, but just come and listen to me, who 'm an elder of my church and found twenty people guilty of thieving at the last sessions where I was juryman. Bless'd if I don't think sometimes that there's not an article in my shop but what has some poisonous stuff in it; and if you'd just look under my scales there you'd find a bit of bacon fat of two ounces weight, which allows me to

give so much short to every customer I serve. If one of 'em finds it out I apologize, put it down to an accident, and all's said. But dang me, when I read in my paper of a mornin' that somebody's been sent to gaol for obtaining money under false pretences, I can't help thinkin', supposin' it were called false pretences to sell a parcel of birch twigs as tea, what cell in Millbank should I be stewin' in by this time?"

"And me and me?" shouted a white-smocked milkman, whose hilarity had been too uproarious not to excite Patrick's suspicion. "Let's say now a sick child gets milk ordered it—pure milk, says the doctor, who thinks cows grow about like blackberries. So we serves the mother milk like that in these 'ere cans, and then she wonders why the child dies. But I don't wonder, nor does my master, Lor' bless you!"

"Well, I'll tell you what!" broke out a worthy bystander with a wine-basket on his shoulders, and speaking in the hottest wrath. "If I could have the handlin' of you I'd just have you all tied up and treated to the cat-o'-nine-tails until 'alf London 'eard your screechin'. Yes, bothered if I wouldn't," added he, as the other spectators, heartily approving his words, chorussed, "And sarve 'em right too: let's punch their 'eads for 'em." But here the larger hand of Patrick's watch having sought out the man with the basket, this champion of the weak continued pensively: "And yet I don't know why I should talk of havin' you flogged when I'm just carryin' here six bottles of logwood decoction to a young lady whose life might be saved, they say, if she took good port-wine to pick her strength up. The family ain't rich, and it's all they've been able to do by pinchin' and savin' to buy these 'ere six bottles and eighteen others, which the young lady 'as taken in the last six weeks, and doesn't feel any the better from, says she, which I don't think odd. I saw her sittin' at the open window propped by pillows when I took home the last lot of logwood; and she smiled to me, and I don't mind sayin' that if it 'adn't been for business bein' business all the world over, I should 'ave 'ad 'alf a mind to tell 'er mother: 'Don't yer buy no more of this wash, mum; if the young lady rests 'er 'opes on sich stuff, yer'd better save the money to buy 'er a pretty gravestone when the time comes.'"

Patrick O'Featherhead did not pursue his experiments farther. He left the milkman exchanging invectives with the grocer, the logwood man shrieking over his six broken bottles, which an energetic costermonger who sold rotten apples had just kicked into the roadway, and the butcher barricading his shop against the assaults of a hostile mob, foremost among which figured a furious fish-fag, who brandished a putrid lobster in her hand. Putting his dial back into his pocket, Patrick looked at his companion with a somewhat scared seriousness, and said, without much brogue this time, for he was more astounded than excited: "I hope it won't be like this everywhere: body of St. Pathrick! there seem to be no more honest people in these par-ts than I could afford to feed meeself."

"Everybody's honest everywhere," replied the stranger wisely; "but we live in an age of business competition, as some great man has said."

"Well, let's go the Parlimint; there'll not be business competition there, I take it," remarked Patrick O'Featherhead, who was already beginning to reflect that the dial he had risked his life to wear was, perhaps, "the devil's own instrimint."

"Parliament'll do us both good to see," was the stranger's answer, and so the pair stepped on together till they reached Palace Yard, inside which Patrick tested his smaller hand on a cabman, who, obviously for the first time in his life, leaped off his box and running after a provincial family who had delivered him 4s. 6d. as the fare from Charing Cross, returned three of the ill-won shillings with vows of contrition. Patrick and his friend followed the provincial family into Westminster Hall, crossed barristers, peers, and members of Parliament, and reached the public lobby of the House, whither a gentleman, looking unpleasantly henpecked, was leading a group of other gentlemen of similar appearance to interview some legislators respecting the rights or wrongs of women. Patrick resisted the temptation of bringing his truth-hand to bear upon these gentlemen, and forcing them to an outspoken statement of their minds. He left himself in the hands of his companion, who appeared to be acquainted with some members, and who soon procured a couple of tickets which admitted himself and Patrick to the strangers' gallery.

The sitting had just commenced, and for Patrick, who had but once before beheld the spectacle, nothing could be more imposing than the spectacle of Mr. Nineteenth-century Speaker in a seventeenth-century wig. He moreover felt a becoming amount of awe at sight of the Cabinet Ministers sitting in a row like brothers and undergoing with equanimity the ordeal of the "badgering half-hour." It seemed, however, that there was something wrong, for a gentleman on the opposition benches, who apparently felt less awe for the row of brothers than Patrick did, was questioning one of them in scathing terms as to an abuse which had been detected in his department—just as if it were worth while to be inquisitive about abuses! Now Patrick would not have had the profanity to work his dial on anything so right honourable as the Minister below him, but his friend was of a different opinion, and suggested the application of the small hand to draw from the Minister a declaration the diametrical opposite of what he was then brewing. So the small hand was turned, and lo! up rose the Minister, to the speechless stupefaction of his colleagues, to confess that the abuse in question was indeed a disgraceful one, and to vow that he would set himself, without loss of time, to exterminate it.

A panic ensued on the ministerial benches, as if the right honourable gentleman had gone mad; but what was this first panic to that which followed when a new question about a new abuse having been put to a second Minister, this gentleman stood up and, under the influence of Patrick's truth-hand, emitted the following few remarks: "Yes, the honourable gentleman has touched upon an abuse which I may say I have most tenderly cherished, and which, whatever may be my official promises on the subject, let him be persuaded I shall no more think of eradicating

than I should of cutting off my ears. I could not eradicate it if I would, for innumerable clerks and interests compass me on every side, and I am only my own master when I wish to commit mischief, not when I am anxious to repair any. The honourable gentleman reminds me that when out of office I once made a speech against this abuse. This is true, and I am convinced that I shall assail it again with some energy when next out of place; but one should carefully distinguish between the utterances of a politician who sits where I do, and one whose seat is opposite. They are so dissimilar that even when merged in one body they should be held for all practical purposes to form two beings apart. . . ."

But here the tumult waxed so formidable that the right honourable gentleman's speech was cut off short. The whole ministerial force stood on its legs in dismay, whilst the opposition, exulting with triumphant irony, shook the very glass of the ceiling with its jeering cries and its shouts of laughter. It struck Patrick's impartial mind that there was rather too much of this laughter on the opposition benches, so singling out a gentleman who was taking a very prominent part in the merriment, he brought him to the table as if propelled with a wire, and caused him thus to unburden himself:—

"The words just spoken, sir, went to my heart like balm, for I recognized in them the accents of pure truth, such as I might have spoken myself had I stood in the right honourable gentleman's place; and, here, I appeal to any gentleman behind me as to whether he too. . . ."

But once again the noise at this point attained such a frantic height that further hearing was impossible. Patrick's dial hands were now being turned to all quarters of the house in succession, and gentlemen were rising up on every side with dishevelled hair, and clamouring all together, their distracted harangues crossing each other like arrows in a battle. Here and there one could catch a stray sentence flying as a splinter amid the fray.

"I voted for the bill, I know, but I'd have given a thousand pounds to have it thrown out. . . ."

"What can I do? if I spoke and voted according to my conscience I should lose my seat!"

"My constituents follow me like a swarm of flies; there are two of the idiots waiting for me in the lobby."

"What do you think I care, so long as I keep my place? . . ."

"Do you imagine it will matter a straw to me, once I am in office?"

And so on, the confusion swelling like a sea tempest-tossed, until Mr. Speaker, with his face and wig aghast, rose to order in the Queen's name; upon which Patrick, out of respect for his sovereign, restored his dial to his pocket, and the waters were allayed.

"But I have had enough of this," said he, with a frightened flush on his features, when he and his friend emerged into the open air, where a vast crowd had been collected at the report that the Commons' House of Parliament had been visited with lunacy. "If this doal is to taylor

me nothing but what we've learned this day, I'm afther going back to mee lodgings to hang meeself, for the world's not worth livin' in, by the holy crass of St. Pathrick."

"Don't you see how you can make your knowledge of man's weaknesses serve you?" retorted the stranger quickly; "let us go the round of the newspaper offices, see how public opinion is manufactured—into society; learn its shams, miseries, and terrible hidden dramas—into prisons; search how inextricably interwoven are innocence and guilt—into mad-houses; inquire what has turned those brains. . . ."

"No, by arll the saints," cried Patrick O'Featherhead in alarm. "Ye'll be afther makin' the life of me one larnn nightmare with no waking. Let me beleieve there's good in the world, or else go straight out of it like a disgusted jintleman."

They had somehow got into a cab. "Where to?" asked the stranger. "Back to Battersea?"

"Yes, I'm thinking so," was Patrick's mournful reply.

"Well, yes, then, to Battersea," answered the stranger, interrupting him before he could add anything further. "Perhaps you have friends whose hearts you can interrogate by this dial, and if you learn anything good there, you may be reconciled to its use."

"Niver," rejoined Patrick, shaking his head; "and as to frinds, oi've Mr. Flint, who's no frind of mine, but the guardian of me, and divil a bit of good I should learn by prying into his heart, for he hasn't got one. Then," added he with sudden pathos, "I've Milly Wood, who's the frind of another, and if I looked into her heart I should foind Mark Quill there; who's not the man I'd care to see when he's taking the place of meeself in Milly's affections, the scoundthrel!"

Nevertheless, once there, the thought kept rattling in Patrick's head all the way to Battersea that he might put his dial to a final use by making it read Miss Milly's thoughts. He had not much hope, well knowing that Mr. Quill and his 90*l.* handicapped him disastrously; besides which, had not Miss Milly told him as plainly as two and two make twenty-two, that she would never have anything to say to a man who was a vagabone, with no trade to his back but writing poetry? However, Patrick—of whom thoughts of hanging had begun anew to take subtle possession—was reckless, from the bitterness of his general experience. As well read in Milly's heart that she was cruel as the rest of her sex—that she was bad—perhaps as untrue to Quill as she was to him; and then hang himself comfortably, since the only result of new inventions seemed to be to set men by the ears, not to kill them gloriously."

What further thoughts held sabbath in Patrick's troubled brain there is no chronicling; for insensibly it seemed to him that this mysterious and unholy stranger with whom he had made acquaintance was beginning to paralyze his faculties again; watching him the while with diabolical vindictiveness, as if the withdrawal from their dial-working partnership was a thing to be avenged in cold blood,

He felt in his pocket for the dial; it was still there. Then he sought to draw it, and whilst he was still engaged in this effort the cab stopped, and Milly came to open the door, looking so pretty and wonder-stricken that the base soul of Mark Quill was once more consigned to all the fiends in space; and Patrick felt tempted to throw himself there and then on his knees and ask Milly to be compassionate. He did better. He drew the dial and turned the long hand. Milly blushed and attempted to fly, but could not.

"Of course," she faltered, "you know I loved you, and that Mark Quill was all a pretence to make you work and take to something better than writing verses and such silly nonsense. But how can I love you when you put yourself in such a state as this? How can I?"

IV.

What state?

Patrick O'Featherhead opened his eyes and found himself lying in bed. His mysterious friend was seated at the table: Milly Wood was standing at his bed's foot mixing a potion.

"Where am I?" he asked, benightedly.

"You've been very ill," said Milly, half severely. "And only to think of your putting yourself in such a state with sherry. This gentleman, a police-inspector, found you at Chelsea this morning, offering to kill yourself for any man who'd invent a steam-engine. As if any one had ever heard of such a thing."

"And I brought you in custody to your rooms, until I thought you could take care of yourself, and would promise not to think of suicide again," said the inspector.

"But how am I to live?" asked Patrick, dolefully.

"Here is a registered letter come for you this afternoon from Mr. Flint your guardian, I expect, for there are his initials in the corner," said Milly.

"And here is to-day's *Battersea Enlightener*, with a column full of your verses in it," took up the inspector.

"And—and the magnetic dial?" asked Patrick, bewildered.

"Ah, you've been raving about that all day," laughed the inspector. "I suppose you mean this watch and chain of yours we found on coming in."

Here Miss Milly blushed.

"You know, Mr. O'Featherhead, you had a watch when you came here, and sold it; so, as you told us last week that to-day was your birthday, mamma and I thought we'd buy back the watch and set it on your table here as a surprise."

"Oh, Milly," muttered Patrick in a low voice as Milly approached him with the potion, "I'm not sure that I'm so glad about its being a hallucination, for I dreamed you said that you loved me."

"And you don't believe in dreams?" asked Miss Milly, spilling half the medicine in her confusion.

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Russian Ghost Stories.

IN one of the most charming of the numerous prose idylls contained in his *Notes of a Sportsman*, Ivan Turguenief has sketched a group of Russian boys, sitting by night around a fire they have kindled in the fields, and telling each other stories about uncanny sights and eerie sounds. The Sportsman, who has lost his way in the darkness, passes the night at their bivouac, listening until nearly daybreak to their simple chat, and gazing dreamily at their young faces lit up by the blaze from the burning faggots. All is quiet around except when their dogs growl, or one of the horses they are watching makes itself heard in the meadows, or some night-bird utters a mysterious cry, or a fish splashes in the slowly-flowing river. The silence and the darkness depress the spirits of the children, whose conversation assumes a gloomy tone in keeping with the surrounding obscurity and the deeper blackness of the shadows thrown by the fitful firelight. And so they talk of the evil spirits that haunt the field and flood and forest, and of forewarnings of coming death, and of visions of the dead, until the night is far spent, and the fire dies out; and then the voices sink into silence, and all things seem to repose together.

Of such stories as were told by these young watchers in the *Bejine Meadows*, and of others on similar themes, but of a still more sombre hue, the Russian villagers possess a rich store. With some of them the peasant reciters delight to while away the long winter evenings, adding a delicious horror to the awe inspired by the night, and enabling their hearers to experience those acute sensations of terror which are so universally enjoyed; others are solemnly related as matters of fact, to be religiously believed and scrupulously preserved by reverent tradition, not for the amusement but for the edification of the listening world. It may be worth while to compare a few specimens of these "stove-side tales" with the ghost stories which, in the pre-scientific period, were so popular around our own untutored firesides.

The modern English ghost is usually represented as a dejected and harmless being, with the burden of a secret generally weighing on its conscience, and with spectral chains frequently clanking about its unsubstantial limbs. The terror it inspires appears, as a general rule, somewhat unreasonable, its shadowy semblance being of a nature, it might be supposed, to excite compassion rather than alarm. But the spectre of Slavonic story is too often a really appalling visitor, one by no means framed of such stuff as dreams are made of. A combination of corpse and fiend, it unites with a taste for blood a great capacity for slaying

and devouring. By far the most thrilling of the stories about the Dead current among Slavs, as well as in Hungary and Greece, refer to the Vampire—that Oriental bugbear which, so far as Europe is concerned, seems not to thrive in an Occidental atmosphere. The folk-lore of some of the Western peoples,—of the Scandinavians, for instance, and more especially of the Icelanders,—bears frequent witness to the superhuman strength as well as the inhuman disposition of the awakened Dead, but the savageness of such spectres usually stops short of cannibalism. The true Vampire is most confidently to be looked for among races which are of Turanian origin, such as the Hungarians, or which—as in the case of the modern Greeks, the Servians, and the Russians—have been subjected to the powerful influence of a Turanian people.

It will be apparent from the stories which are quoted below—most of them in a slightly abridged form—that Russian ghosts of all kinds possess the power of assuming some sort of corporeal shape, but in the great majority of cases it is only the spirits of wizards and other notorious sinners which make use of this faculty. Although the fact is not stated, it may fairly be conjectured that the unshrouded corpse of the following tale was the tenement, during its lifetime, of a specially sinful soul.

In a certain village—the story runs—there was a girl who hated work but loved gossip. So she never spun herself, but used to invite the other girls to her house, where she feasted them and they spun for her. During one of these spinning feasts a dispute arose as to which of the party was the boldest.

“I’m not afraid of anything,” said the lazybones.

“Well, then,” said the spinners, “if you’re not afraid, go through the graveyard into the church, take down the Holy Picture from the door, and bring it here.”

“Very good,” said she; “I’ll bring it, only each of you must spin me a distaff-full.”

Well, she went to the church, took down the picture, and brought it home with her. But then the picture had to be taken back again, and the midnight hour had arrived. Who was to take it?

“Go on spinning, you girls,” said the lazybones; “I’ll take it back myself. I’m not afraid of anything!”

So she went back to the church, and replaced the picture. As she passed through the graveyard on her return, she saw a corpse in a white shroud sitting on a tomb. It was a moonlight night, and everything was visible. She went up to the corpse and pulled its shroud off. (Its hour for stirring hadn’t arrived perhaps.) Then she went home, carrying the shroud with her.

After supper, when everybody had gone to bed, all of a sudden the corpse tapped at the window, saying, “Give me my shroud! Give me my shroud!” The other girls were frightened out of their wits. But the lazybones took the shroud, opened the window, and said:—

“There, take it!”

"No," replied the corpse, "take it to the place you took it from."

Just then a cock crowed; the corpse vanished.

Next night, at the same hour, after all the spinners had gone to their own homes, the corpse came again, tapped at the window, and cried:—

"Give me my shroud!"

Well, the girl's father and mother opened the window and offered the corpse its shroud, but it cried:—

"No! Let her carry it back to the place she took it from."

Just then the cocks began to crow—the corpse disappeared. Well, next day they sent for the priest, told him the whole story, and implored him to help them. The priest reflected awhile, and then told the girl to come to mass next day. So in the morning she went to mass. The service began. Numbers of people came to it. But just as they were going to sing the "Cherubim Song," a terrible whirlwind arose. And it caught up that girl in the air and then flung her down on the ground. And straightway the girl disappeared from sight; nothing was ever found of her except her back hair.

Not only are their shrouds indispensable to the comfort of the Dead; no corpse, according to a wide-spread tradition, can abide the loss of its coffin-lid. One of the stories tells how a villager was driving home one night when his horse came to a standstill in front of a graveyard. So he unharnessed it, and let it graze among the tombs, on one of which he stretched himself. But somehow he couldn't go to sleep. After he had remained there some time, all of a sudden the grave began to move beneath him. He sprang to his feet and got on one side. Presently he saw the grave open and a corpse come forth, clad in a white shroud, and holding a coffin-lid. Going to the church, it laid the coffin-lid at the door, and then ran off towards the village.

The villager picked up the coffin-lid and waited to see what would happen. After a time the dead man returned and was going to snatch up his coffin-lid, only it wasn't there. Then he began searching about for it, traced it up to the villager, and cried:—

"Give me my lid, or I'll tear you to bits."

"Oh, yes!" replied the moujik, "and how about my hatchet? It's you that will get chopped up."

"Do give it me, good man!" begged the corpse.

"I will, if you'll tell me where you've been, and what you've been doing."

"Well, I've been in the village—killed a couple of lads there."

"Now tell me how they can be brought to life again."

"Cut off the left skirt of my shroud," reluctantly answered the corpse; "and, when you go where the dead lads are, put it into a pitcher with some live coals, and then shut the door. The smoke will bring the lads back to life."

So the villager cut off the left skirt of the dead man's shroud, and gave him back his coffin-lid. The dead man went to his grave; the grave

opened. But just as he was getting into it, the cocks began to crow, and he hadn't time enough to get covered up properly. One end of the coffin-lid remained sticking out of the ground.

The day began to dawn. The moujik harnessed his horse and drove into the village. In one of the houses he heard sobs and cries. In he went; there lay two dead lads.

"Don't cry," said he, "I can restore them to life."

"Please do," exclaimed the family. "We'll give you half of all we have."

So he did just as the corpse had directed him, and the lads came back to life. Then he related all that had occurred during the night. The news spread abroad through the village; the whole population assembled in the graveyard. They found out the grave from which the corpse had come out, they tore it open, and they drove an aspen stake right through the dead man's heart, so that he might no longer rise up and slay people. But they showed great respect to the moujik, and sent him home with a rich reward.

As a specimen of the stories which turn upon the longing of Vampires for human flesh and blood, the following may be taken. A soldier on furlough was on his way to his native village, when he happened to pass by a graveyard. It was growing dark, for the sun had set some time before. Just then he heard footsteps behind him, and some one crying aloud, "Stop! you can't get away!" He looked back, and there was a corpse, running, and gnashing its teeth!

The soldier ran away as hard as he could, caught sight of a roadside chapel, and bolted straight into it. In the chapel was another corpse stretched out on a table, with tapers burning in front of it. The soldier hid himself in a corner, hardly knowing whether he was alive or dead. Presently the first corpse came running up and dashed into the chapel. Thereupon the other one jumped up from the table on which it lay and cried, "What have you come here for?"

"I've chased a soldier in here, and I'm going to eat him."

"Come now, brother! he's run into my house. I shall eat him myself."

"No, you shan't!"

"Yes, I shall!"

So they began to fight. The dust flew like anything. They'd have gone on fighting ever so much longer, only the cocks began to crow. In a moment both the corpses fell flat on the ground, and the soldier went on his way rejoicing.

Soldiers often figure in these stories as overcomers of Vampires. One of them, for instance, is on his way home on a visit when he passes a graveyard. All is dark around, but on one of the graves he sees a fire blazing. Guessing that this is the work of a lately-deceased wizard, of whose evil deeds he has heard terrible accounts, he draws near, and sees the wizard sitting by the fire making boots.

"Good evening, brother," says the soldier.

"What have you come here for?" asks the wizard.

"To see what you're doing."

The wizard throws his work aside and cries, "Come along, brother! Let's enjoy ourselves. There's a marriage feast going on in the village."

"Come along," says the soldier.

They went to where the wedding was—proceeds the story—there they were treated with the utmost hospitality. The wizard ate and drank, and then got into a rage. He drove all the guests out of the house, threw the bride and bridegroom into a deep slumber, took an awl and made a hole with it in one of the hands of each of the young couple, and then drew off some of their blood in a couple of phials. Having done this he went away, taking the soldier with him.

"Tell me," said the soldier, as they went along, "why did you fill those bottles with blood?"

"In order that the bride and bridegroom might die. To-morrow morning there will be no waking them. And no one but myself knows how they can be restored to life."

"How's that to be done?"

"They must have cuts made in their heels, and some of their own blood must be poured into those wounds. I've got the bridegroom's blood in my right-hand pocket, and the bride's in my left."

The wizard went on bragging.

"Whatever I wish," says he, "that I can do."

"I suppose it's impossible to get the better of you?"

"Impossible? No! If a man were to make a bonfire of aspen boughs and burn me in it, he'd get the better of me. Only he'd have to look sharp about it. For snakes and worms and all sorts of vermin would crawl out of my inside, and crows and magpies and jackdaws would come flying about, and all these would have to be caught and flung into the fire. If so much as a single maggot were to escape, in that maggot I should slip off."

The soldier stored up all this in his mind. He and the wizard went on talking until they reached the graveyard.

"Well, brother!" said the wizard. "Now I must tear you up, otherwise you'll go repeating all this."

"What are you talking about!" replied the soldier. "You're very much mistaken in thinking you'll tear me up; I'm a faithful servant of God and the Emperor!"

The wizard gnashed his teeth, howled aloud, and sprang at the soldier, who drew his sword, and laid about him lustily. They fought till the soldier was all but exhausted. Then, suddenly, the cocks began to crow, and the wizard fell lifeless to the ground. The soldier took the phials of blood out of his pockets and then went his way.

Next morning he went to the house in which the wedding feast had been held, and there he found every one in tears, for the bride and

bridegroom lay dead. The soldier carried out the instructions he had received from the wizard, and brought the young people back to life. Instead of weeping there immediately began to be mirth and revelry. But the soldier went to the *starosta* and told him to assemble the peasants, and to prepare a bonfire of aspen wood. Well, they took the wood into the graveyard, tore the wizard out of his grave, placed him on the wood, and set it alight—the people all standing round in a circle, holding brooms, and shovels, and fire-irons. The pyre became wrapped in flames; the wizard began to burn. Then out of him crept snakes and worms and all sorts of vermin, and up came flying crows and magpies and jackdaws. The peasants knocked them down and flung them into the fire, not allowing so much as a single maggot to escape. And so the wizard was thoroughly consumed, and the soldier collected his ashes and strewed them to the winds. From that time forth there was peace in the village.

In the story just related the wizard flings away a pair of boots on being accosted by a visitor. In that which follows a corpse shows a strong attachment to its foot-gear.

A soldier, who was going home to his village, had walked two days—on the third he lost his way in a dense forest. Towards evening he caught sight of a couple of cottages at the edge of the wood. Entering the farther one he found an old woman in it, and asked her to let him sleep there.

"If you do," she replied, "you'll get into trouble. An old man—a terrible wizard—died a little time ago in the next cottage, and now he wanders about by night from one house to another, and eats folks up."

"Bah, granny! 'Except God will, no pig gets its fill.'"

The soldier ate his supper, undressed, and climbed on to the boards above the stove to sleep, laying his sword by his side. Exactly at midnight all the bolts flew back, and the doors opened. In burst the dead man, clothed in a white shroud, and flew at the old woman.

"What hast thou come here for, accursed one?" cried the soldier.

The corpse left the old woman, jumped on to the raised sleeping-place, and began fighting with the soldier, who hacked away at it with his sword, and cut off all its fingers, and yet couldn't master it. Locked in each other's arms they both rolled off the upper boards, and fell heavily to the ground—the soldier above, the wizard below. The soldier seized him by the beard and treated him with sword cuts till the cock crowed. Then the wizard immediately became lifeless, lying on the floor without moving, just like a log. The soldier dragged him out into the yard and flung him into the well—head downwards, legs uppermost. On the wizard's legs were splendid boots! New ones, studded with nails, smeared with tar!

"What a pity to waste them," thinks the soldier. "Suppose I pull them off?"

So he pulled off the dead man's boots and went back into the hut.

After a while he took leave of his hostess and went on his way again. But from that very day, wherever he spent the night, exactly at midnight, the wizard would appear under the window and demand his boots.

"I will never leave thee," he would say menacingly. "All the journey will I perform along with thee; in thy home I will give thee no peace; when thou art back in the army I will be the plague of thy life!"

At last the soldier could not stand it any longer.

"Well," said he, "what dost thou want, accursed one?"

"Give me my boots."

The soldier flung the boots out of the window.

"There! now let me be rid of thee, O unclean spirit!"

The wizard seized his boots, uttered a shrill cry, and disappeared.

The next story is so brief and terse that it may be quoted in full and without any alteration.

A moujik went out one day in pursuit of game, taking a favourite dog with him. He walked and walked through woods and bogs, but got nothing for his pains. At last the darkness of night surprised him. At an uncanny hour he passed by a graveyard, and there he saw a corpse in a white shroud, standing at a place where two roads met. The moujik was horrified, and knew not which way to go—whether to walk on or to turn back. "Well, come what may, I'll go on," he thought at last, and on he went, his dog running at his heels. The corpse saw him and came to meet him, not touching the earth with its feet, but keeping about a foot above it—only the shroud fluttered along the ground. When it had come up with the sportsman it made a rush at him, but the dog seized it by its bare calves, and began a fierce tussle with it. When the moujik saw his dog and the corpse grappling with each other he was much pleased at things having turned out so well for himself, and he set off running homewards as fast as he could. The dog kept up the struggle until the cocks began to crow, when the corpse fell lifeless to the ground. Then it ran off in pursuit of its master, caught him up just as he reached home, and rushed at him furiously, trying to bite and worry him. So savage was it, and so persistent, that the people of the house had the greatest difficulty in beating it off.

"Whatever has come over the dog?" asked the moujik's old mother. "Why should it be so angry with its master?"

He told her all that had happened.

"A bad piece of work, my son!" said the old woman. "The dog was disgusted at your not helping it. There it was, fighting the corpse, and you left it—thought only of saving yourself! Now it will owe you a grudge for ever so long."

Next morning, while all the rest of the family were going about the farmyard, the dog was quite quiet. But the moment its master made his appearance, it began to growl like anything. They fastened it to a chain. For a whole year they kept it chained up; but, in spite of that, it never forgot how its master had offended it. One day it got loose, flew

straight at him, and began trying to throttle him. So they had to kill it.

As a general rule the ferocious behaviour of Slavonic ghosts is quite uncalled for. No excuse can possibly be made for the conduct of so unpleasant a corpse as that which is described in one of the stories as entering a room in which two men lie asleep, tapping them (in the most unpleasant sense of the word) on the back, drawing off their blood in buckets, and swallowing it with indecent satisfaction. But some extenuating circumstances may be admitted in the case of the Dead with whom the following (unabridged) narrative has to deal.

The schoolmaster of a certain village happened to be passing the church one night when he fell in with a dozen robbers.

"Do you know," said they, "whereabouts the rich lady lies who died in your part of the world last week?"

"Yes, I know. They buried her in the crypt."

The robbers threatened him with a sharp knife, and compelled him to go along with them. When they came to the crypt they took the iron grating out of a window, and lowered the schoolmaster through it by means of their sashes, saying:—

"Open the coffin, take off the lady's seven rings of gold studded with precious stones, and bring them here."

The schoolmaster lifted the coffin-lid and began taking the rings off the dead woman's hands. Six of them he got off easily, but the seventh he couldn't manage. She had doubled up her finger, and wouldn't let the ring go. He told this to the robbers; they flung him a knife and cried:—

"Cut off her finger, then!"

The schoolmaster picked up the knife, but the moment he cut off the finger—that very moment the dead woman awoke, as if from sleep, and cried aloud with a terrible voice:—

"Brothers and sisters! Arise quickly and help me! No rest had I during my life, and now will they let me have none, even after death!"

At the sound of her voice the coffins burst open, and the Dead began to come forth. The robbers heard the noise they made and fled; the terrified schoolmaster ran up the staircase leading from the crypt, rushed into the church, hid himself in the choir, and slammed the door to.

After him rushed the Dead. Seeing where he had hidden himself, they began dragging up their coffins and piling them one on top of another, so as to be able by their help to climb over into the choir. Meanwhile the schoolmaster, who had found a long pole, began pulling the coffins down with it. In this sort of work he spent the time till midnight. But when twelve o'clock struck—the Dead took down their coffins and went back into the crypt.

The schoolmaster was left more dead than alive. Next day he was found in the church terribly ill, an utterly broken man. The priest came,

heard his confession and gave him the Sacrament. Soon after that the schoolmaster expired.

Even the ghosts of old friends or near relatives sometimes behave with downright brutality, utterly forgetful of their former love. In a Lithuanian story two girls who are going to a dance happen to remember two former sweethearts of theirs who are no longer alive, and are imprudent enough to give them a sort of invitation to come to the party. The Dead listen, and come, and dance with the girls, who, after a time, begin to suspect their ghostly nature, and therefore take the precaution to tread on their toes. Finding that the boots the seeming young men wear are empty, the girls know that their suspicions are well founded, so they fly at once. Fortunately for them they are able to make good their escape, but they are closely pursued by their dead loves, whose intention evidently is to tear them to pieces.

In like manner the Russian stories too often bear witness to the demoralizing effect of the grave on love and friendship. Still there are exceptions, some of them showing that a kindly feeling towards old acquaintances may be maintained even underground. A certain artisan, for instance, is represented as meeting an old friend one night who had been dead ten years.

"Come home with me," says the ghost; "we'll drink a cup or two once more."

"Come along," replies the artisan; "on such a happy occasion as this we may as well have a drink."

After enjoying themselves for a time in the dead man's dwelling, the artisan says he must go home. The ghost tries to persuade him to stay, and then, finding he cannot succeed, offers to lend him a horse. The artisan got on its back (the story concludes) "and was carried off—just as a whirlwind flies! All of a sudden a cock crowed. It was awful! All around were graves, and the rider found he had a gravestone under him."

The kindly side of the ghostly character makes itself apparent in the following story—one belonging to the well-known Rip van Winkle family. There were two young villagers, it states, who were so much attached to each other that they made this agreement. Whichever of the two married first was to invite the other, alive or dead, to his wedding. After a time one of them died. A few months later the other was going to be married, and was on his way to the church with his friends, when the sight of the graveyard recalled his promise to his mind. Immediately he stopped, told his companions to wait for him, went to his old friend's grave, and cried,—

"Comrade dear! I invite thee to my wedding!"

The grave opened, and the dead man came forth and said,—

"Thanks to thee, brother, that thou hast kept thy word. And now let us profit by this happy chance. Enter my abode. Let us quaff a glass apiece of grateful drink."

"I'd do so, only the marriage procession is stopping outside. I'm keeping every one waiting."

"Why, brother! surely it won't take long to toss off a glass."

The bridegroom jumped into the grave. The dead man poured him out a cup of liquor. He drank it off—and a hundred years passed away.

"Drink another cup, dear friend!"

He drank another—two hundred years went by.

"Now, comrade dear, drink a third cup. And then go, God speeding you, and celebrate your marriage!"

He drank the third cup—three hundred years passed away.

The dead man took leave of his comrade, the coffin-lid fell, the grave closed. The bridegroom looked around. What had been the graveyard was now a piece of waste ground. No road was in sight, no kinsmen were there, no houses; all around grass and nettles grew in profusion. He ran to the village—but the village was different from what it used to be. The houses were altered, the people were all strangers to him. He went to the priest's house—the priest was not the one who used to be there—and told him everything. The priest searched through the church-books and found that, three hundred years before, a bridegroom had gone to the graveyard on his wedding-day, and there had disappeared; and his bride, some time after, had married another.

As in other stories, so in the Slavonic, frequent mention is made of the gratitude evinced by the Dead for services rendered to them. Kindly folks who bury stray corpses are haunted in the pleasantest manner by grateful ghosts, which save them from dangers or make their fortunes, and any one who succeeds in getting the weight of a curse taken off a phantom is sure to earn the good-will of the relieved spirit. Here is an outline of a story of this class. A certain peasant had two sons. The "recruiting time" came, and the elder son was taken as a conscript. Nor was that all, for the younger son enlisted as a volunteer, so he also became a soldier. Then the old mother became wroth with her younger son, and cursed him for ever and aye. Now it chanced that the two brothers were draughted into the same regiment, and they got on together excellently for a couple of years. But at the end of that time the younger son fell ill and died, and was decently buried. One night the dead brother appeared to the living one, and said,—

"Brother, awake!"

The live brother was terribly frightened, but the dead man said,—

"Fear not! I have not come without good cause. Dost thou remember how our mother cursed me when I enlisted? Now the earth refuses to receive me. So this is what thou must do, brother. Get leave of absence and entreat our mother to forgive me. If thou persuadest her, I will repay thee well."

The elder brother obtained his leave of absence and went home. He reached his village, and his father and mother were delighted to see him, and began asking him whether he had ever come across his brother or heard any news of him.

"Alas! he is dead! Forgive him, mother dear!"

The old woman began to cry, and forgave him.

The pathos of the tale is not maintained to the end, the narrator proceeding to tell how the dead brother evinced his gratitude by chopping off the nine heads of "an awful snake," which threatened to eat the elder brother on his wedding night. But the story with which we will conclude this paper will not lose any of its effect by being quoted without alteration or abridgment.

In a certain village there lived a man and his wife—lived peacefully, lovingly, happily. All their neighbours envied them, but the sight of them was a pleasure to good people. Well, the wife bore a son, but directly after childbirth she died. The poor moujik wept and wailed. Especially unhappy was he about the babe. How was he to nourish it now, how to bring it up without its mother? He hired an old woman to look after it—did his best for it. Then a wonderful thing came to pass! All the day long the babe would take no food and did nothing but cry; there was no soothing it anyhow! But as soon as midnight came, one would suppose it wasn't there at all, so silently and peacefully did it sleep.

"What's the meaning of this?" thinks the old woman. "Suppose I keep awake to-night; maybe I shall find out."

Well, just at midnight, she heard some one open the door quietly and steal towards the cradle. The babe lay quite still, just as if it was being suckled.

The same thing happened the next night, and the third night too.

Then she told the moujik about it. He called together his kinsfolk, and held council with them. They determined, on this,—to keep awake and to spy out who it was that came to suckle the babe. So at eventide they all lay down on the floor, and close at hand they set a lighted candle hidden in an earthen pot.

At midnight the cottage-door opened, and some one stole up to the cradle—the babe became still. At that moment one of the kinsfolk suddenly disclosed the light. They looked—and saw the dead mother, in the clothes in which she had been buried, kneeling beside the cradle, and bending over it as she suckled the babe at her dead breast.

The moment the candle lighted up the scene she stood up, gazed sadly on her little one, and then went away without saying a single word to any one. All who saw her stood terror-struck for a time; and then they found the babe was dead.

Arabic Vers de Société in the Thirteenth Century.

THE subject of the following sketch, although enjoying a considerable reputation in the East, is absolutely unknown in Europe; with the exception of a few lines quoted by Ibn Khallikan, the Arabic biographer, I am not aware that a single verse of his poetry has ever been printed or translated. Having while in Egypt become possessed of a copy of his poems, I was so struck with the beauty of the language and the freshness and originality of the thoughts, that I have since made them the companion of my leisure hours, and have long cherished the idea of presenting them to English readers in an English dress.

To enable us to form a correct estimate of the works of any poet, it is essential that we should know something of his personal history and of the circumstances under which he wrote; I must therefore preface my remarks with a short biographical memoir.

Abu'l Fadhl Zoheir was born in February, 1186 A. D., at Wady Nakhleh, a valley in the vicinity of the sacred city of Mecca in Arabia. He was of noble family, tracing his descent from El Mohalleb ibn Abi Sufrah, an Arabic general of the Caliph Abd el Melik, builder of the celebrated mosque at Jerusalem; from him he took the surname of El Mohallebi. From his eminent talents as a penman and author, he received the honorary title of El Katib, Behá ed din ("the Writer, the Splendour of Religion"), by which, or the familiar abbreviated form of his name, El Behá Zoheir, he is generally known. He entered the service of El Melik es Sálîh Najm ed din, son of El Melik el Kamil, a grandson of the brother and successor of Saladin. When El Melik el Kamil died, his eldest son, El 'Adîl ascended the throne of Egypt; but El Melik es Sálîh, who had previously obtained possession of Damascus, set off from that city with the intention of dethroning his brother and usurping the sovereignty. He had already reached Nablûs when his uncle, 'Imâd ed din, lord of Baalbekk, made common cause with Asad ed din Shirkoh, Prince of Emessa, and burst into Damascus with his troops. This event, which happened in September, 1239 A. D., caused a profound sensation in the country, and the soldiers of Es Sálîh, alarmed for the safety of their homes and families, hastened back to Damascus, leaving their chief at Nablûs with only a few attendants, amongst whom was the poet El Behá Zoheir. El Melik en Nâsir, Prince of Kerek, at once made for the spot, and, taking advantage of Es Sálîh's defenceless condition, carried him off a prisoner to the fortress of Moab. Here he remained until June, 1240 A. D., when he was released and recalled to Egypt by the Emirs of his brother El 'Adîl, who had deposed that prince and thrown him into prison. El Melik es Sálîh was then

proclaimed Sultan of Egypt, and exercised his authority with great moderation and justice, repairing the mosques and other public buildings, and winning the affection of the people by his liberality and kindness. El Behá Zoheir, who had followed him through all his previous vicissitudes of fortune, accompanied him to Egypt as secretary and prime minister, and remained in high favour with his royal master until the death of the latter, which took place in 1249. His influence with the Sultan was unbounded, and was always exercised for good. He died in November, 1258 A. D., during the terrible plague which broke out in Egypt in that year, and was buried at Lesser Caráfa, near the tomb of the celebrated Mohammedan doctor, Es Shafii, founder of the sect to which the princes of the house of Saladin belonged.

It was during the reign of El Melik es Sálîh that the crusades of St. Louis of France took place. The events of this invasion, the taking of Damietta by the Franks, their subsequent evacuation of the city and ignominious retreat, all these incidents are frequently alluded to in the poems of El Behá Zoheir. In such allusions the poet always, of course, regards the question from a Moslem standpoint; the followers of the Prophet are fighting for the faith against hoards of infidel barbarians from Europe :

Am I to count thee friend or foe ?
Thine are not over friendly actions ;
I've enemies enough, I know,
Duennas, mentors, rivals,—though
I laugh at all such factions.
In truth, I have a hard-fought fight
Against this infidel Crusade ;
I battle for the Faith and Right :—
Then come, and to thy Moslem knight
Bring strong and present aid.

We are so accustomed to look upon the Crusaders as the champions of religion and civilization, and to regard the Saracens as "foul and savage Paynims," that it is perhaps well to be reminded now and then that chivalry is not the exclusive right and heritage of the West.

The works of El Behá Zoheir, being composed at such a time as this, when the intercourse between Eastern and Western nations had become greater than at any previous period of modern history, are especially interesting, as exhibiting the language and thought of the desert applied to altered circumstances and modified by more civilizing influences.

Early Arabic poetry is unquestionably nervous and masculine, breathing the free spirit of men whose home was in the desert and who were not yet corrupted by the effeminate manners of city life. But at the same time it must be confessed that its range of subjects is extremely limited and that one soon tires of the incessantly recurring descriptions of petty conflicts and scenes of tent life, and of the stereotyped allusions to timid gazelles, fleet camels, plaintive doves and the like. In the first century and a half of the Hejrah a great change took place in the literary taste of the age.

The story which is told of Omar the first Caliph burning the library of Alexandria, "because the Corán was literature enough for him," is doubtless a fable, but like all other fables it contains some grains of truth at bottom. In the early ages of Islam, the Corán was all in all to the fanatical followers of Mohammed, and if they preserved the literary relics of their ancestors it was only for the light which these shed upon the philology and interpretation of their scriptures. From the second to the eighth century of the Hejrah may be considered the Golden Age of Arabic literature, and the munificence of the Abbasside Caliphs attracted to their court the most brilliant literary men of the East. Under the enlightened rule of El Mensúr, Harun er Rashid and El Mamún, the works of Greek and Indian philosophers, mathematicians, physicians and geographers were translated into the Arabic language and preserved from the oblivion into which they would otherwise have fallen. Then too were founded the celebrated Universities of Basra and of Kufa in Mesopotamia, of Damascus in Syria, and of Cairo in Egypt. Later on came the civil and religious revolutions which reduced the power of the Abbasside Caliphs and the rival dynasty of the Fatemites, claiming descent from Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed, established themselves in Egypt and succeeded to the position of patrons of Oriental learning. The successes of Saladin the Great in turn humbled the pride of the Fatemites, and the Abbasside Caliph was once more proclaimed Sovereign of the East. The sovereignty was, however, merely nominal, and the jurisdiction of the Caliph was confined to spiritual matters, while his conquering vassal remained the real and independent master of the Empire. But Saladin was worthy of the authority of which he had thus obtained possession, and proved himself as munificent a patron of learning as either Abbasside or Fatemite had been. His successors followed in his footsteps, and learned men from all parts of the East flocked to the Court of Egypt, sure of appreciation and reward.

In poetry, Alexandria seems to have been what it certainly was in philosophy and theology, the meeting-place of East and West. The inhabitants of the East and West differ so widely in tastes and habits, that we should hardly expect to find a community of ideas existing between an Arabic and a European writer; and yet the works of Eastern authors are filled with proverbs, sentiments, and metaphors, which we are accustomed to regard as peculiarly Western in origin and character. To cite a few examples:—The introduction to the *Sháhnáma*, the great national Epic of Persia, enunciates in so many words the axiom that "Knowledge is power;" the proverb, "Man proposes, but God disposes," exists in Arabic with even the same alliterative jingle, *el 'abdu yudabbir wa 'llahu yucaddir*; and to Mohammed himself is attributed the saying: "The believer is never stung by a scorpion *twice* at the same stone," which is not far removed from our own vulgar proverb, "Once bit, twice shy." The poems of El Behá Zoheir contain numerous instances of these curious parallels; in one case, addressing his mistress, he says:—

But oh ! beware lest we betray
 The secrets of our hopes and fears,
 For I have heard some people say
 " That walls have ears."

In another he apologizes for some ungallant suspicions about a lady by remarking that " What every one says must be true."

In an amusing volume published some years since, and entitled *Sketches of Cambridge by a Don*, a story is told of a Trinity man who depreccated the contempt shown by members of his own Ancient and Royal Foundation for " small-college men," pleading, on behalf of the latter, that " They, too, were God's creatures." I do not accuse the English author of plagiarism from Arabic sources, but it is curious to find El Behá Zoheir making use of the same humorous figure of speech ; for, addressing the Sultan Najm ed din, he says, " Since I have met thee I have spurned all men besides, and have hardly looked upon them as God's creatures."

But it is not only in such details that the works of El Behá Zoheir remind us of the production of Western poets ; the whole tone of thought and style of expression much more closely resemble those of an English courtier of the seventeenth century than of a Mohammedan of the Middle Ages. There is an entire absence of that artificial construction, exaggerated metaphor, and profuse ornateness of style which render Eastern poetry so distasteful to a Western critic ; and in place of these defects we have natural simplicity and epigrammatic terseness combined with a genial wit that remind us forcibly of the *Vers de Société* of the English poet Horrick. Here is one of his epigrams :—

They told me such an one had now
 Turned sober and repented quite ;
 Amazed, I asked them when and how
 He'd spurned the wine-cup's pure delight ?

I saw him yesterday once more
 Upon a bed of roses lain,
 As drunk and jovial as before ;
 And then the mystery was plain.

For, when I asked him what he meant,
 And begged he would the cause rehearse
 Which had induced him to repent ?
 He answered : 'twas an empty purse !

In that peculiar trifling of words and sentiments of which the English poets of the Restoration were so fond, El Behá Zoheir is excessively happy. Take, for instance, the following verse :

I melt away whenc'er I hear
 The liquid sweetness of her voice.
 My heart will flutter when she's near—
 Pray does it very strange appear
 To dance when we rejoice ?

Or this :

Didst thou but look upon me here,
 A paradox would meet thy gaze ;
 Mine eyes are drowned with many a tear,
 And yet my heart is in a blaze.

Even to the hackneyed hyperbole of dying for love he contrives to give a new and original turn :

Oh ! torture not my life in vain,
 But take it once for all away,
 Nor cause me thus with constant pain
 To die and come to life again
 A thousand times a day !

This last idea he has worked out more seriously in another poem, changing what was a mere prettiness into a really poetic sentiment :

Thou art my soul, and all my soul is thine,
 Thou art my life, though stealing life away !
 I die of love, then let thy breath divine
 Call me to life again, that so I may

Reveal to men the secrets of the tomb.
 Full-well thou knowest that no joys endure,
 Come, therefore, ere there come on us our doom,
 That union may our present joy secure.

Approaching old age, and the first appearance of grey hairs, furnish him with many pleasing and novel conceits :—

Now the night of youth is over, and grey-headed dawn is near,
 Fare ye well ye tender meetings with the friends I held so dear :
 O'er my life these silvery locks are shedding an unwonted light,
 And disclosing many follies youth had hidden out of sight.

It is seldom that we see a metaphor so well carried out, or so pregnant with meaning as this ;—the contrast between the dark tresses of youth and the white hairs of old age, the sudden awakening from the night of folly and inexperience at the dawn of maturer judgment, and the comparison of the streaks of grey amidst the massy black locks to rays of wisdom lighting up the dark sky of ignorance.

And again :

Over my life thy constant love hath shed
 Such lustre that the radiance which I wear
 Grows into shape, assuming on my head
 The false appearance of this silvery hair.

For delicate turns of expression I may quote his apostrophe to a messenger who had brought him news of his beloved :

Continue, prithee, in this pleasant strain,
 Thy words such sweet surprise and wonder move ;
 Oh ! let me look upon thine eyes again,
 For they have looked upon the maid I love !

And the following simple but graceful lines :

I lay my bosom's secret bare,
Yet doubt and tremble all the while.
But gazing on thy face so fair,
Two happy omens greet me there—
Thy beauty and thy smile.

When polygamy prevails, and women are kept in degrading ignorance, we cannot expect to find much sentiment and affection. The Eastern poets, it is true, are often eloquent on the theme of love, but love with them is either mere sensual admiration or affected passion. The poet either expends his ingenuity in depicting his mistress's charms, and in heightening the colouring by the employment of striking imagery, or he raves about the burning passion that consumes his bosom. Power and imagination there nearly always is in an Eastern love-song, but feeling and true sentiment are for the most part entirely absent from such compositions. It is precisely in this respect that El Behâ Zoheir differs so widely from his co-religionists ; his utterances of love come direct from the heart, and are altogether free from conventional affectation. What can be more full of genuine feeling than the following tender apology for a blind girl with whom he was in love ?

They called my love a poor blind maid—
I love her more for that, I said.
I love her, for she cannot see
These grey hairs that disfigure me.
We wonder not when wounds are made
By an unsheathed and naked blade ;
The marvel is that swords should slay
While yet within their sheaths they stay.
She is a garden fair, where I
Need fear no guardian's prying eye ;
Where while in beauty blooms the rose,
Narcissuses their eyelids close.

Or the description of a lovers' parting :

The camel-men were on the move,
The fatal hour was drawing nigh,
But, ere we went away, my love
Came up to bid a last good-by.
And like a startled young gazelle
From side to side she glanced in fear ;
Nor dared to breathe the word farewell,
Lest spiteful folks should overhear.
With tearful eyes awhile she stays,
Then hastens onward, weeping sore,
Then turns to give one longing gaze,
And whisper a "good-by" once more.
And oh ! within my anguished breast
The quenchless fire of passion burns !
And oh ! my life is sore o'erpressed
By fickle Fortune's tricks and turns !

But, if an ardent lover, El Behá Zoheir seems to have been an inconstant one, even by his own showing :

I'm fickle, so at least they say,
And blame me for it most severely ;
Because I court one maid to-day,
To-morrow love another dearly.
'Tis true that though I vow and swear,
They find my love is false and hollow,
Deceiving when it seems most fair,
Like lightning when no rain-drops follow.

And for this fickleness he accounts by a quaint conceit :

You'd like to know, I much suspect,
The secret which my conduct covers :
Well, then, I'm founder of a sect,
Grand Master of Peculiar Lovers.

And elsewhere he says—

I will record my story, and indite
All that has passed between my love and me
From first to last, and then the book I write
Shall be a manual of "the Lovers' rite,"
A text-book for the whole fraternity.

Perhaps nothing in the book is so characteristic of the period in which Zoheir lived, or reflects so vividly the tone of religious thought then prevalent, as these playful allusions to mystic rites and secret fraternities. In order that the reader may appreciate them fully, I must briefly review the religious history of Mohammedanism during the immediately preceding centuries.

On the ruins of the ancient mysteries of the Magian priesthood there arose in Persia, towards the end of the third century of our era, a number of secret associations which with the doctrines of the Zoroastrian religion combined those fanciful metaphysical speculations which are chiefly known to the European world under the name of Gnosticism. These sects were seven in number :—1. The Kaiyumersiye, or followers of the doctrines of Kaiyumers, the first king of Persia, and, according to the Magian legend, the first created human being. 2. The Zervaniye, who regarded *Zerván acórana*, or "unbounded time," as the prime cause and mover of all things. 3. The Zardushtiye, or disciples of Zoroaster. 4. The Seneviye, or Dualists. 5. The Maneviye, or Manichæans. 6. The Farkúniye, who taught that there existed two antagonistic principles, Father and son, and that these two, originally hostile, were reconciled by the intervention of a third celestial power. 7, and last. The Mastekiye, or followers of Mastek. Their tenets, religious and political, were precisely identical with those of the Communists of the present day, their avowed object being the abolition of all existing religions, universal equality and community of property and women.

When the Arabs became masters of Persia these different societies

exercised, as might have been expected, an important influence on El Islâm, and the severe monotheism of Mohammed soon became tainted with the theories of Sabæan philosophy. The contest for the succession among the immediate survivors of Mohammed afforded an opportunity for the two parties to join issue; the cause of Ali and his family was espoused by the Persian party, while the Arab party favoured Othman and his adherents. In this way arose the first great schism in Mohammedanism, that of Sunni and Shiah, a schism which perpetuated the old hatred between the Semitic and Japhetic races—between the Jew and Gentile. For several centuries these doctrines went on acquiring more and more currency amongst Mohammedans, and frequent insurrections and fresh schisms were the result.

In A.D. 910, 'Obcid-allah, surnamed El Mehdi, a heresiarch of this school, made himself master of Egypt, and, claiming to be descended from Fatima, daughter of Mohammed and wife of 'Ali, succeeded in establishing himself as a rival to the Abbasside Caliph of Baghdad—a kind of Anti-Pope in Islam. From this moment the Persian Gnostic heresy prevailed in Egypt; it was propagated by official agents, of whom the chief was called *Da'i ud du'dt*, or "Supreme missionary," and associations almost identical in their constitution with modern Freemasonry were founded in Cairo under the name of *Mejâlis el Hikmeh*, or "Scientific meetings;" the building in which they were held being called *Dar al Hikmeh*, or "The Scientific Lodge." The doctrines thus taught were known by the name of Ismaelite, and were extensively propagated in Syria, where they gave birth subsequently to the Druze, Assassins, and other notorious sects, amongst which I should be strongly inclined to number the nominally Christian order of Knights Templar. I have already said that Saladin compassed the final destruction of the Fatemite Caliphate, and re-established in name at least the authority of the house of Abbas. Saladin was a rigid adherent of the Sunni sect, and his first act on assuming the independent sovereignty was to obliterate every vestige of the Fatemite heresy. The "Scientific lodges" were finally closed, and the formation of secret societies for religious or political purposes was strictly prohibited. The same policy was pursued by the succeeding princes of his house, and thus it is that we find El Beha Zoheir in the reign of El Melek es Sâlih, the seventh Sultan of the dynasty, turning into ridicule rites and observances which half a century before were part and parcel of the religion of the state. The levity with which Zoheir treats themes usually regarded with extreme reverence by Mohammedans must be attributed to his antipathy to the Ismaelite heresy rather than to a want of respect for El Islâm itself. The texts and passages of the Corân which he turns into jest are not those which involve any of the broader principles of Monotheism, but rather those which were supposed to shadow forth prophetically the advent of Mehdi, the Mohammedan Messiah, and upon which so many impostors and enthusiasts have, down to the present day, founded their claims to a divine mission.

Thus we find him saying in words which must sound sheer blasphemy to a Moslem ear :

I work great wonders in fair Cupid's name,
I come to lovers with a mighty sign ;
No skill had any to declare his flame
Till taught to utter it in words of mine.

I am the Prophet of the Latter-day,
Mine are the Votaries of Love and Youth ;
These are my preachers—in my name they pray,
And own my mission to be Love's own truth.

The poem from which these verses are taken contains a number of similar quotations from the Coran, distorted from their original meaning, and applied to such secular subjects as love and wine ; and that too without the excuse of mystic allegory, behind which the Persian poets always take shelter from the charge of irreverence. However, the use of such technical terms as *Dā'i*, "Preacher or missionary ;" *shiah*, "votary ;" *Sāhib ez Zemān*, "Lord of the Latter-Day," &c., leaves no doubt but that the covert satire is aimed exclusively against the opponents of the Sunni creed.

That Zoheir was perfectly capable of regarding religion with becoming reverence, and even of standing up manfully in its defence, and of employing the formidable weapons of his own wit and eloquence against scoffers and atheists, is amply proved by the following epigram :

A foolish atheist whom I lately found
Alleged Philosophy in his defence.
Said he, "The Arguments I use are sound."
"Just so," said I ; "*all sound and little sense.*"

"You talk of matters far beyond your reach ;
You're knocking at a closed-up door," said I.
Said he, "You cannot understand my speech."
"I'm not King Solomon," was my reply.

The sting of the satire lies in the allusion to the Moslem legend that King Solomon understood the *language of beasts*. Solomon and his miraculous power over the spirits of earth and air, are favourite subjects with El Behá Zoheir, as with most Arabic poets. Thus, having apostrophized the Zephyr, and besought it to carry a message to his beloved, he says :

Each day I send my envoys there,
But bootless do they aye return,
Each day brings forth some gloomier care
For me to learn.

And now I bid the very wind
To speed my loving message on,
As though I might its fury bind,
Like Solomon.

These constant allusions to the history and traditions of the Arabs, make the Diván of El Behá Zoheir particularly valuable as a repository of Oriental learning. The dedicatory verses afford an instance of this :

Thou'rt afraid to come near me I warrant,
For fear lest a storm should arise,
When thou seest me weep such a torrent,
And heave such tempestuous sighs.
But the magic of Love, were a quarter
Of what thou professedst sincere,
Would have taught thee to walk on the water
Without any fear.

Or if, as I grieve in this fashion,
My groans are a source of alarm
Lest the terrible heat of my passion
Should do thee some bodily harm.
Join the Dervishes' ranks and discover
The secrets Rifaiyans claim,
And then, like a Fire-King and lover,
Plunge into the flame.

Here, besides the introduction of several recondite Arabic sayings, he alludes to a sect of Dervishes founded by a certain Ahmed er Rifá'í, who laid claim to miraculous powers, and were wont to delude the public by performing such juggling feats as eating live snakes and plunging into fiery furnaces.

When we remember the servile adulation which Eastern despots are accustomed to exact from those about them, and the unworthy behaviour to which their favourites are too often compelled to descend, it speaks volumes for El Behá Zoheir's high character and principles that he was able to retain his position at court for so many years without the least sacrifice of his self-respect. But that such was the case his own poems show: a free and independent spirit breathes through them all; and the rebukes which he occasionally administers to persons high in office, from whom he has received a real or fancied slight, are as frank and outspoken as they are free from ill-temper and querulousness. Take, for example, the following remonstrance addressed to the Vizier Fakhr ed din, from whose door he had been rudely repulsed by the domestics :

'Twas love that brought me to thy door,
Not any need in which I stood;
But that I love the great and good,
And love thy pleasant converse more.

For former gifts and favours shown
My thanks were always duly paid;
Not thanks wherein the flatterers trade,
But such as honest men may own.

* * * * *
My wrath is kindled for the sake
Of Courtesy, whose lord thou art;
For thee I take it so to heart,
No umbrage for myself I take.

Although Eastern poetry abounds in glowing imagery, and in metaphors drawn from natural objects, such as trees and flowers, rocks and streams, yet it must be confessed that a real appreciation of natural beauty is rarely exhibited either by Arabic or Persian authors. Behá ed din Zoheir, on the contrary, seems to have been a passionate lover of Nature, and to have derived the keenest enjoyment from the contemplation of her beauties. Witness his description of a garden upon the banks of his own majestic Nile :

There rain-drops trickle through the warm still air,
The cloud-born firstlings of the summer skies ;
And dew-drops glitter on the branches there
Like a pearl necklace on a bosom fair,
Or like the tears that now bedew mine eyes.

There the young flowerets with sweet perfume blow,
There feathery palms their pendent clusters hold
Like foxes' brushes waving to and fro ;
There every evening comes the after-glow,
Tipping the leaflets with its liquid gold.

Can anything be more graceful than the comparison of the dew-drops on the rose petals to pearly beads upon a maiden's neck, or more artistic than the introduction of the second simile by which the poet's own melting mood is made to harmonize with the scene described. The vivid picture of the after-glow will be appreciated by any one who is familiar with Mr. Elijah Walton's exquisite sketches of Egyptian scenery, or who has been fortunate enough to witness a sunset on the Nile.

And to quote another instance of strong local colouring and vivid word-painting :

God, look on Egypt, many a happy dream
Of by-gone days in memory I retrace ;
Methinks I look upon the Nile's fair stream
With all the myriad craft upon its face.

Recount to me the beauties of the Nile,
No more of Tigris and Euphrates sing,
Those nights of joy in Gheeza and the Isle,
Their memories ever round my heart will cling.

There, where the flowerets on the meadows lie
And spot the verdure like a peacock's vest,
There, where the azure of the star-lit sky
Is all gem-studded like a falcon's breast.

There bright Khaleega, like a spotted snake,
Through meads and gardens trails its glittering coil.
There did my love and I our pleasure take,
Oh ! love, and love alone, is worth our toil.

There was the pleasure such as never palls
Of sense unsatiate and ravished eye,
But now vain sorrowing my spirit galls
For happy days, for happy days gone by !

Even where he uses the tropes and similes which have become common-places with the Arabic poets, his genius adds some delicate touch that gives to the tritest metaphor all the charm of originality. A favourite conceit, for example, is that the image of the beloved often visits the lover in a dream; let us see how El Behá Zoheir makes use of this pretty idea:

Let thy sweet image hovering nigh
A watch upon my actions keep;
'Twill tell thee if I close an eye
By night in sleep.

And in another poem:

Lo! but last night a wondrous thing befel;
As I lay tossing on my restless bed,
The image of the maid I love so well
Hovered about me but, alas! the spell
Broke as I clasped her, and the vision fled.

Fled, ere my heart had compassed its delight—
Had I offended her in word or deed?
Or did she see me on that darksome night
Murdered by love, and in her sudden fright
Back to the safety of her chamber speed?

Eastern poets are very chary of admitting anything like a personal allusion to females into their verse, but El Behá Zoheir is not so sensitive, and frequently celebrates his mistress by name. Even when he yields to convention, and employs the usual far-fetched metaphors to describe her, he takes care to render the allusion intelligible to his readers:

Speak of that "Willow" or that "Flowery Mead,"
Pronounce not openly my Zeinab's name,
But in fair metaphors relate thy tale.
Things that are lovely form the fittest veil
To screen her loveliness and her fair fame.

Behá ed din Zoheir is eminently the poet of sentiment, and shows but little sympathy with the metaphysical school of philosophy. As if, however, to display his wonderful versatility of genius, he occasionally breaks out into strains as mystic as those of Háfiz himself, the arch-priest of metaphysical poets. Thus, although the following lines have little apparent mysticism in them, yet a Persian philosopher would find plenty to dilate upon in the subtle allusion to the "Love of Truth:"

That man, believe me, greatly errs
Whose heart a dusky maid prefers.
For me, I love my maiden fair
With snowy neck and golden hair.
My bright example truth shall be,
For truth is ever fair to see.

Elsewhere his Anacreontic utterances are innocent of any allegorical interpretation.

I have already referred to Zoheir's powers of satire; the following invective against an old lady who was giving herself juvenile airs, deserves to be quoted, if only as a specimen of the scandal of the thirteenth century :—

How much longer shall we see you aping every girlish trick ?
 You're a little out, I fancy, in your reckoning of years :
 For the dye or the pomatum which upon your face you stick
 Is the only thing about you which like youthfulness appears.

What have you to do with favours which from coyish maids are wrung ?
 People never levy taxes from a ruined site !
 The time for love and pleasure is when youths and maids are young ;
 Young people only in young people's company delight.

I see you walking in the street in veils of muslin dressed,
 Like an old and worthless volume with a new and handsome back.
 When I ask what is beneath them, people set my doubts at rest,
 For they say it's just a bag of bones put in a leathern sack.

My very good old lady, you surely don't expect
 That your odious advances will ever catch a bean ;
 You pretend to be a lady, but I very much suspect
 That you wouldn't find such conduct in the lowest of the low.

I would not say I think you are a silly vain old goose,
 Because a goose would feel itself insulted by the phrase ;
 You'll never get a husband, so you'll find it is no use
 To keep up any longer these ridiculous displays.

This poem, we are told, was written "by request."

It is in panegyric that Zoheir is least happy. The official congratulatory verses of a poet-laureate are seldom to be compared with the spontaneous efforts of his own unfettered genius. But even here, if not always strictly poetical, Zoheir is always original. The following is a fair sample of his eulogistic style :—

Oh ! my lord and master of high degree,
 In greatness and glory and fair renown,
 Thou hast climbed right up to the top of the tree
 As fast as others come rolling down.

And honour that seemed beyond thy reach
 Thou takest as though from a heap hard by.
 I blush to address thee in this poor speech,
 For a pearl art thou and a bead am I !

These compositions have, nevertheless, a special interest of their own, inasmuch as they contain many allusions and details which are of the greatest use in enabling us to understand the history of the period and in making us acquainted with the personal character of the principal actors therein.

It is, of course, impossible to convey in a translation any adequate idea of the beauty of the language of the original ; but it is, after all, Zoheir's

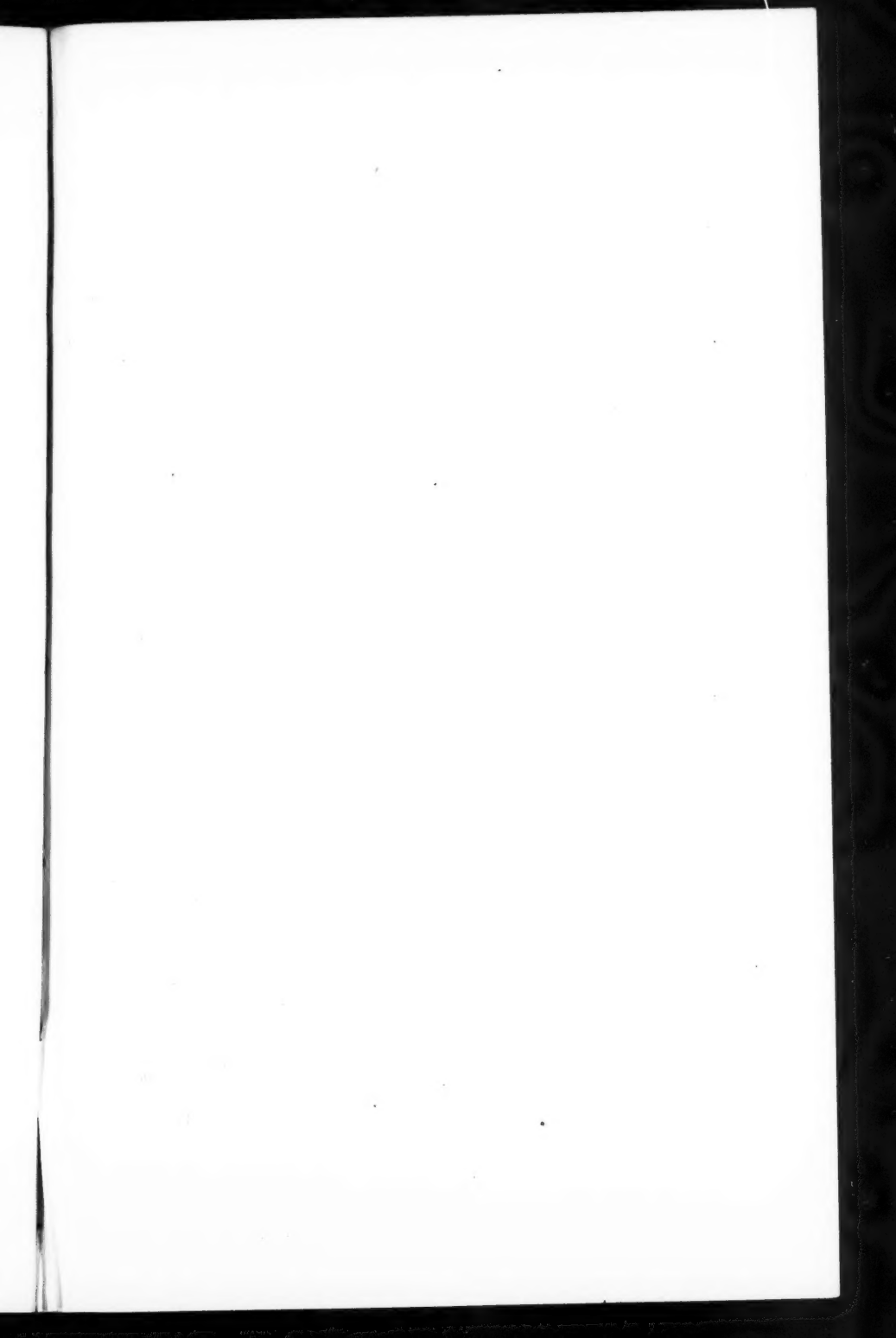
language which constitutes his chief charm. The Arabic, although belonging to a post-classical period, is perfectly correct in diction, and it is, at the same time, so free from all affectation of archaisms that the whole volume of poems does not contain more than half-a-dozen words which would present any difficulty to a person acquainted with modern Arabic.

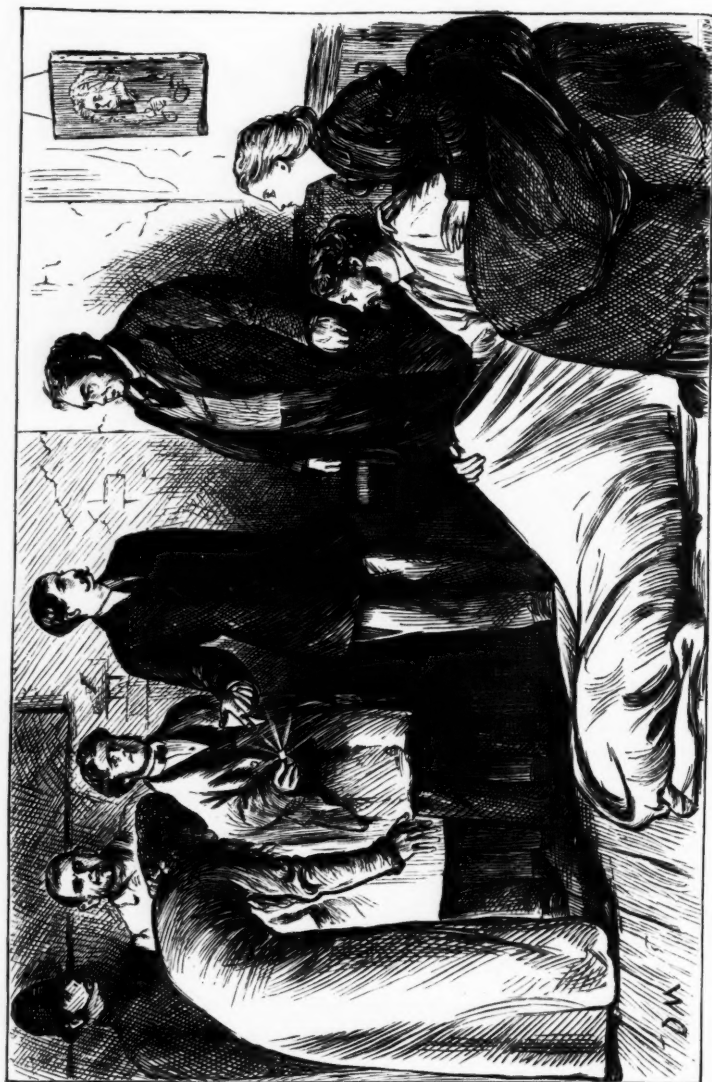
Although Eastern literature is still "caviare to the million," yet Oriental poets have been recognized and appreciated in Europe. The genius of a Hâfiz or a Sâdi has shone through the persistent attempts of translators to mar its lustre. Perhaps a similar good fortune awaits Zoheir, and, in spite of the shortcomings of my rendering, his poetry may yet be better known.

The Praise of Light.

Who praiseth thee in fittest mood, O Light ?
 Perhaps 'tis one who while the city sleeps,
 Long time a sick man's dreary vigil keeps,
 And wistful counts the signs of waning night :
 The dying sound of wheels, the midnight hush,
 The according bells of congregated towers,
 That chime the round of dusk slow-footed hours,
 Till daylight dawns at last : then with a rush,
 Of glad expectancies he weeps and prays,
 And half he prays to Light and half to God.
 "If now, indeed, I tread the upward road
 From unfamiliar Death to Life's fair ways,
 O lovely Light ! let me no longer shame,
 By heart unclean or crooked, thy sweet name !"

M. BETHAM-EDWARDS.





"THAT," SAID THE EXPERT, BOWING HIS HEAD, "THAT IS THE GREAT EMERALD OF KANDAHAR."

Pearl and Emerald.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. GRODE CHANGES HIS MIND.



EANWHILE Mr. Grode himself must not be altogether forgotten.

He still lived all by himself in the house near Russell Square, now more dusty than ever. He had his coffee hot in the morning, his chop at half-past one, his dinner of three courses at six; he slept well, and was not more ill-tempered than he had always been, for the simple reason that any increase of what cannot be increased is a simple impossibility. He was growing very rich, people said, and was giving up attending sales, though no change in his style of living gave any support to the popular idea.

His lawyer had drawn up a will

for him, by which the greater part of his money was left to found some philanthropic society—say, for the suppression of filial disobedience and French ladies'-maids—and the rest to some society for the conversion of the Jews. If any should think that his own conduct towards Felicia and her husband gave him the faintest, the most momentary uneasiness, they are very much mistaken. Busy men pride themselves with justice upon having no time for sentiment, and he believed most fully in the maxim, as though it were gospel, that as a man makes his bed so must he lie. There are plenty of people who have millstones instead of hearts—far too many to make it wonderful that he should be one of them. And there are plenty of people, too, whom it is sheer waste of time and trouble to subject to any sort of psychological analysis—that one great duty of modern tale-tellers—simply because there is nothing about their psychology to analyze. I am—or ought to be—ashamed to say that I do not know of what sort of mineral substance millstones are made; but I am very sure that it is something very simple, and that there is nothing about them that the eye does not see. And if any one should insist that

there is no man in the world, however hard he may be to outward eyes, who has not a tender place about him somewhere, let him just look round and see.

One morning—the very morning, in fact, that followed his daughter's midnight vision—while sitting after breakfast in his dusty front parlour, he was told by his man-servant that a beggar-like looking man was at the door who desired to see him.

“A beggar? I am always having beggars after me.” A sort of uncomfortable feeling came over him that it might be his unlucky son-in-law. “Tell him to be off this instant.”

“So I did, sir.”

“Then tell him again.”

“He said it was most important business.”

“A beggar with most important business! A likely story. He didn't say what it was, I'll be bound.”

“No, sir.”

“Then why the devil didn't you send him packing? You haven't let him into the hall?”

“He said as if he couldn't see you now, he'd wait till he could. So I shut the door and left him on the step.”

“Then just go and tell him if he can't tell you what his business is, he shan't tell me. And if he won't go, send for a policeman.”

The man went out, but presently returned.

“He says, sir, as you'd be sure to see him if I said his name was Levi.”

The word seemed to act like magic upon Mr. Grode. He started, and looked more like thunder than ever.

“Levi? An old Jew dwarf as ugly, as sin? A thieving-looking rascal, with a hump-back and squinting eyes?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then tell him to go to hell; and if he won't, send for a constable and give him in charge. And don't bother me about him again.”

“On what charge, sir?”

“Anything—on his face, if you like: it would hang him any day.”

Once more the man went out, but once more returned.

“He won't go, sir. He says as how he's brought you—you know what.”

“I know what? Yes, I do know what. Send for the constable.”

But just then Nathan Levi himself entered the room. The servant had forgotten to close the street-door upon him, and following him quietly, the visitor had walked in without leave.

Mr. Grode started up in a rage. “What! you dare?” he exclaimed. “Get out of my house this instant, you old scoundrel, or I'll have you kicked out before you know where you are.”

The Jew made no sign of resentment. It was as if he had said, “Kick, but hear.”

"I 'ave brought you vot you vant, Mishter Grode," he said humbly.

The footman, who had taken note of the long arms, the enormous fists, and the heavy feet of the intruder, and who thought that, if any kicking had to be done, he would rather have nothing to do with it, went away, leaving the two rivals alone.

"Do you hear me?" said Mr. Grode, stamping on the floor.

Nathan Levi looked at him with indescribable cunning.

"I 'ave shanged my mind," he said. "I did not tossh 'im in, after all. 'E vosh found in the fender."

"And I've shanged my mind too," answered Mr. Grode, mocking him. "You wouldn't take me at my word, and the time's gone by. 'Them as will not when they may, when they will, they'll find it too late in the day.' So get out, or——"

"I 'ave brought 'im in my vaistcoat-pocket. I vill let you 'ave 'im very sheap—dirt-sheap. Shay two 'undred thousand."

"I don't know what you mean. You must be mad or drunk."

"Me mad?" cried out the poor old fellow; "me drunk? 'Elp me, I vish I 'ad the chance! Vot—not a dirty two 'undred thousand for the big emerald that ish vorth shiksh millionsh?"

"You mean to say you have got the big emerald? A likely story! You look like it, I must say."

"You did not believe me ven I shaid I 'ad tosshed 'im in."

"No: and I don't believe you now, when you say you found him in the fender."

"You vant to beat me down, Mishter. Vell, I vill let you 'ave 'im for von 'undred thousand. It is a shin and a shame," he said, with a terrible sigh; "but I am a poor old man now. I can't make no more bargainsh."

"Pooh!"

"For ninety, then? Eighty? On my shoul, I can't shay no lessh. Eighty thousand guineash."

"Ah," said Mr. Grode, with a sudden and peculiar smile, "I see. Come, now, suppose I offer you ten thousand. I'll give you a minute to think it over."

"Vhat! ten thousand dirty shovereignsh for the biggest shtone in the world—ten thousand for vhat is vorth shiksh millionsh? Ten thousand for the mosht beautiful, the most preshioush, the most vonderful thing that anybody ever shaw? For vhat 'ash been fought about by the Shineshe and the Mogulsh and the Ashtecsh, and everybody—for vhat I could shell for vot I like to the Queen hershelf to-morrow? Vhat! ten thousand poundsh? You are laughing at me, Mishter."

Meanwhile Mr. Grode, without seeming to listen to him, had written something upon a scrap of paper with his gold pencil-case, had rung the bell, and had given the paper to the footman. Then he closed the door again, and returned to his easy-chair.

"Then why don't you take it to the Queen?" he asked.

"Because I want to give 'im to you ; because you vill give a fair prishe for 'im for the shake of old timesh."

"Very well. You say you have got the Great Emerald of Kandahar about you ?"

"In my vaishtcoat." And he laid both his hands affectionately over the region in which the soul is said to be placed by the Chinese.

"And you offer it to me for ten thousand ?"

"Eighty thousand !"

"Well, then, I will give you five. Not a penny more."

The Jew lifted up his hands in unaffected horror.

"Help me Moshesh !" he said. "You are sheating me, Mishter ; you are taking advantageshesh of me."

"Five thousand pounds."

"No, I vill not shell him—not for five thousand—not for five 'undred thousand. I vill take him to Mynheer van Weemwoude."

"As you please. And when Mynheer van Weemwoude begins to ask you a few questions—how you came by it, for example——"

"Ah, Mishter Grode, be mershiful ! It would be a shin to shell him to you for vhat you shay."

Mr. Grode sat in silence, gloating on the struggle that was going on in the heart of Nathan Levi. He thought it was a struggle between need and greed. But, in truth, it was a harder, deeper struggle than he could conceive.

It was no struggle between need and greed. But it was a struggle between need and need ; between the genius of the talisman, whose gifts had become a necessity, and something else, which had become a greater necessity still, and with which greed had equally little to do. Let it not be supposed for an instant that when he, in spirit or in body—it matters not which—had crept downstairs from his interview with Felicia out into the still greater darkness of the street, any feeling of compassion for what he had seen, or any desire to relieve it, entered into his soul. On the contrary, it was with a sort of envious, malicious pleasure that he considered that there were people in the world as poor and as wretched—at least, externally—as himself, and that goodness and beauty and purity and unselfishness were no talismans against the misery that was the cause and effect of his own crooked nature, his own hideousness, and his own self-indulgence. He had for a short while, during his days of ceremonial mourning, when a false remorse was gnawing at his heart, almost come to fancy that his wretchedness of mind and body had arisen from his exaggerated breach of the first of all the divine laws that govern the relations of men to one another. So it was with a strange and indescribable feeling of mingled envy, pride, and despair that he learned that Nemesis is as capricious as Fortune, and that while the sun shines alike upon the unjust and the just, the storm falls not only upon the unjust, but upon the just also. It was in this condition, in this feeling that he was not specially marked out by his special sins for special

punishment, that he once more lighted his wax-candle and opened his trap-door to enjoy with a good conscience the intoxication of his old dreams.

But somehow the old intoxication would not come. It was true that the fascination of the stone itself was greater than ever. After all, it was the most valuable jewel in the whole world; no sentiment could destroy that fact of facts. And was a jewel worth six millions of pounds to be outweighed by a word and a smile that cost nothing to the giver, any more than the sunlight and the open air cost their giver more than a word and a smile? And yet not so much as even the memory of the magic light would fill the chamber at his bidding. The piece of crystal was as fair as ever to the sight, but seemed in its heart to be as dull as when it had been first dug from the mine. The jewel fairies seemed to have departed, and the echoes of their songs to have grown as silent as his own soul. He could do nothing, in spite of himself, but think of the sweet voice that had greeted him morning after morning, and of the compassionate smile that—he knew it not fully till now—had stood to him in the place of that whole beauty of the outer world which is made up of human sympathy more than any of us really know: more than was ever discovered so fully as it was discovered now by him. Now that the voice and the smile greeted him no more even the Emerald seemed to have lost its light and its soul, never to regain them until its owner should regain once more the voice and the smile.

No one can tell what the daily word of the only human creature between whose soul and his there yet remained that solitary link had become to him. Even had Felicia been old or plain, it would have been almost the same. But, as things were, all the affection and all the sympathies that he had succeeded in withdrawing from his kind had avenged themselves by concentrating themselves upon one. He had so far almost succeeded in both eating his cake and having it too. He had sacrificed the world for the sake of the Emerald, and yet had, for a time and after a fashion, succeeded in keeping the best part of the world in the person of Felicia, who had bestowed upon him so much in bestowing upon him anything at all. Those who live in an atmosphere of kindness cannot know, even in imagination, what even one kind word may be to one who dwells in an atmosphere formed by the breath of fairies, of genii, of demons, nay, even of angels: of beings which, however beautiful, however divine, are still not human. And now even this was gone: the cake was eaten at last, and though he might henceforth revel in the very supremest ecstasy of dreams, they would henceforth be dreams and nothing more. He had lost that which he had sought to sacrifice to the great Emerald, but to keep which—well, there was no avoiding the conclusion—it was worth while to sacrifice even the great Emerald of Kandahar. A few hundreds of pounds would suffice to gain him back his good angel, even though to acquire them he had to forsake his sublime goddess and to deliver her into worldly and evil hands.

When the morning came without Felicia, his need of her had acted as an impulse that carried him with his priceless treasure straight to the door of Mr. Grode. But when he had to conclude his heart-breaking bargain, his whole nature felt up-torn by the roots. To part with anything for less than its worth was hard enough, but to part with what had for so long been the ruler of his life and his soul, to which he had sacrificed all things that men hold dear, was well-nigh impossible.

This was the contest that went on in his soul, and which Mr. Grode did not see.

He made frantic appeals to Mr. Grode's interest—they fell upon flint : to his generosity—they fell upon adamant. But the harder grew the struggle, the stronger grew the deeper need : in fact, the worst had long been over. Well, even five thousand pounds would more than suffice to purchase back the spirit of his new dream.

With a sudden wrench, as if even now he feared to change his mind, he drew from the rag that served him for a waistcoat the precious casket, and without opening it—he dared not look upon the idol that he was forsaking—laid it upon the table.

"For five thousand, then," he said at last in a voice hoarse with agony. Just then was heard a knock at the street-door.

Mr. Grode, without leaving his seat, glanced out of window and then laid his broad hand over the casket.

"Levi," he said, "you have brought me a stone which, you say, is the great Emerald of Kandahar, valued at six millions sterling. You offer it to me at five thousand—that is to say, at just one twelve-hundredth part of its value, or at the rate of a good deal less than one farthing in the pound. You dare not take it into the market for fear you should be asked questions. You say that it has been in your hands ever since the middle of last winter, and yet that, though you have been starving, you let yourself be ruined, and never made the least attempt to raise money upon it till now ; and you admit that you have been telling lies about its possession. Is that all true ?"

"Every vord of 'im, sho 'elp me Moshesh !"

"And do you know what a British jury would say to all that ?"

"That I am a damned fool."

"That you are a damned rogue, you mean. This is a false stone."

Just then came another knock at the street-door. The Jew started as if he had indeed been a detected swindler.

"Mishter Grode !" he exclaimed. "It ish the shtone, on my shoul. Do you think I am sheating you ?"

"That we will soon see. If the stone is good, it is mine for six thousand. I will add a thousand to the bargain. If not——"

"I shwear it ish ash true as I shtand 'ere."

"Well, we shall see. But——" a new thought seemed to strike him, and he paused. "You assure me, solemnly, that it is the stone ?"

Nathan Levi put on his hat, as if he were in a court of justice and were about to be sworn on the Pentateuch.

"Mishter Grode," he said, solemnly and anxiously, but with an amount of something very like dignity scarcely to be expected from such a man—so like dignity, in fact, that Mr. Grode himself was impressed by it as much as he was capable of feeling the influence of any nature but his own: "Mishter Grode, we are both men of bushinessh, and we both know 'ow to take care of ourshelves. But about thish I cannot decheive you. If you knew what that shtone ish to me, you vould vonder I do not lie down and die rather than part with 'im for shiksh million timesh shiksh million. If you knew vy I part with 'im, you vould know I could not tell you a lie. It ish like dying to let 'im go: and you do not get liesh from a dying man. I vill take your five thousand poundsh, or your shiksh thousand; vot dosh it matter? and vill only ashk to shee the shtone vonshe more. And I shwear to you by everything von can shwear by that I tell you the truth, and that the shtone ish true."

He was certainly not eloquent: but his faith in his jewel, his indignation at Mr. Grode's doubt, which, whether genuine or only pretended, amounted in his eyes to sheer blasphemy, gave to his words the warmth and earnestness which form the chief part of eloquence. His eyes filled with the tears of one who is about to part from all he holds dear: his voice trembled with his eagerness to refute the slanderous insult which added tenfold bitterness to his loss. Mr. Grode looked at him with astonishment: this was Nathan Levi in a new character with a vengeance.

But, if he could not help feeling impressed in spite of himself, he was not one to let his feeling be seen.

"Take off your hat and don't be a fool," he growled. "Business is business. You want money, I suppose—that's enough for me." He unlocked a drawer in his table, and took out a cheque-book. "There," he said, after a minute or two, "there's my cheque for six thousand pounds. You see I'm as good as my word. Give me a receipt. Here's a piece of paper and a pen."

"And you vill let me shee the shtone?"

"Why? I am not particularly inclined to let it out of my own hands. But you shall see it directly. Write the receipt first, and meanwhile——"

He rang the bell. "Is any one arrived yet from Mynheer van Weemwoude?" he asked.

Mynheer van Weemwoude was a celebrated diamond-merchant and dealer in jewels, with a great establishment in Amsterdam, and agencies in London, Paris, St. Petersburg, and Vienna.

A man, carrying a small box, entered as quickly as if he had been waiting in the hall, and as *à propos* as if he had been sent for since the commencement of the interview between Levi and Mr. Grode. Indeed it may be remembered that the latter had written a note with his gold

pencil-case, and had despatched it soon after the former had entered upon his business.

"I am from Mynheer van Weemwoude," he answered, staring at Levi, who was signing the receipt with trembling hands.

"You understand testing jewels? Of course you do, no one better. Open that casket. I have reason to believe it to contain a most valuable emerald. What is its value?"

The representative of Mynheer van Weemwoude opened first the casket, and then his own case, which contained scales, bottles, and all sorts of apparatus for testing accurately and completely.

After a few minutes of silent expectation, he smiled.

"I am sorry to undeceive you, Mr. Grode," he said, "but——"

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Grode, "it is not valuable?"

"It is valuable in a way, for it is the cleverest thing of the kind I ever saw. You have heard of the celebrated emerald called the Great Emerald of Kandahar? Well, this is an exact imitation, according to the best descriptions. It is worth, I should say, intrinsically, about ninepence. The cleverness of the imitation may make it worth, at a fancy price, about ninepence more."

"It is a false stone, then?"

"It is not a stone at all. It is sheer paste, and nothing more."

"You lie!"

The cry came from Nathan Levi, who started up in a rage, as though he were a knight of old giving the lie to one who called the mistress of his soul by some foul name.

"Mr. Levi!" said the man astonished. "You understand jewels—try for yourself, and see. I am sorry if I have given bad news, or spoiled a bargain."

Trembling all over the Jew tried it himself in all sorts of ways, with scales, instruments, and liquids.

It was too true—he had been the martyr of an imposture. His long arms fell by his sides, his jaw dropped still lower upon his breast, his knees shook as though he were about to fall.

Mr. Grode smiled sternly, and rang the bell again. This time a policeman entered, as though he too had been in waiting.

"Constable," he said, pointing to the miserable Nathan, "I give this man in custody on a charge of obtaining money by false pretences. You will find on him my cheque for six thousand pounds. You had better also take charge of this piece of rubbish, to produce on the trial. And you, Mr. Thompson," he added, turning to the expert, "will be ready to give evidence. You have disappointed me, but I am much obliged to you, all the same. For the present, good morning: I have an appointment to keep."

As for Nathan, he first looked round in pitiable despair, and then suffered himself to be led off without a word.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TEST OF LEAD.

MR. GRODE was one of the most methodical of men. He even piqued himself upon the scrupulousness with which he observed every recognized piece of business-affectation. Amongst other details, he never let a day pass without changing and rectifying, in their green japanned box that hung on a nail over the chimney-piece, the cards that were intended to show at a glance the day of the month and of the week—an ingenious arrangement which in most cases deludes the possessor into the belief that Sunday lasts till the middle of the week, and Christmas-day till mid-summer. But Mr. Grode's tin box was kept as accurately as his chronometer: and to-day its four cards stood as follows:—

18—.

OCTOBER.

14.

THURSDAY.

The very day, it will be remembered, on which the great Emerald was to be delivered into the eager hands of Mr. Smith, otherwise Count Andreas Kromeski. It may be thought that Mr. Grode would willingly have forgotten what would seem to have turned out so barren a day: but he glanced at the date in a composed manner, buttoned himself up, put on his hat deliberately, took his gold-headed cane, and once more bent his steps westward.

Now I do not suppose that any reader of this story takes the faintest interest in the history of Count Andreas Kromeski. But that is not his fault, nor ought he to suffer for it. No doubt there were some far away in Caspia who did take a great deal of interest in him; and there is certainly no doubt but that Count Andreas Kromeski's own head, whether the reader may care about it or no, was very dear indeed to Count Andreas Kromeski. So, for once, he shall be taken at his own valuation, and stand in the place of hero: which, after all, he deserves quite as much as anybody else deserves it.

Count Andreas, then, who spent his mornings in his room at the Caspian Embassy, his afternoons in lounging about, and his evenings at the theatre, was getting anxious and rather impatient. The day was drawing uncomfortably near when the Czar must have either the Emerald or his envoy's head. But Mr. Grode, to whom he was always sending little notes by special messengers, consoled him always by assuring him that he need have no fear: that on the fourteenth of October the jewel should be in his hands. He was bound to take Mr. Grode's word for all the circumstances, without seeking legal advice or guidance: for, be it remembered, secrecy was of the essence of the negotiation. Not even the Caspian ambassador himself, who was only accredited to the Court of

St. James's, was admitted to the confidence of the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary who had been accredited to the house of Cranstoun and Cranstoun.

I have in my possession certain secret memoirs of the Court of Caspia, which would throw much light on the whole affair, and explain pretty fully how it was that this difficult and delicate negotiation had been entrusted to Count Andreas. These, or parts of these, may one day see the light: but, for the present, the subject would form too long a digression. So I will content myself with saying that, on this fourteenth of October, the Count sat in his room, with his watch in his hand, waiting for the hour that was to bring Mr. Grode.

It was very near—terribly near. I am not sure that the Count did not by anticipation feel the hard block pressing against his windpipe, and the wind about his ears caused by the descending steel. At all events, the perspiration was standing in beads upon his brow, and his hand trembled as if he had spent the night before in drinking brandy—as very likely he had, for the Caspians are steady drinkers.

The Count's watch was a chronometer, set in jewels and bearing a miniature of the late Czarina. It stood at five minutes to twelve. The first of the five minutes passed: it was an hour. The second: it was a day. The third: it was a week—the fourth, a month—the fifth, a year. Had there been a sixth, it would have been a century. But then the clock struck; and at the first stroke there was a knock at the door. At the twelfth, Mr. Grode was in the room. The Count gave a great sigh of relief, and wiped his forehead with his cambric handkerchief.

"With English punctuality!" he exclaimed gaily, rising and advancing towards Mr. Grode with effusion. "You have the Emerald? But hush! speak softly—walls have ears—particularly those of an Embassy."

Mr. Grode drew from his breast-pocket a casket, not very unlike in form that which had held poor Nathan Levi's demolished idol, but made of wrought iron, and fastened with a padlock. He retained it, however, in his hand, though the Count extended his eagerly.

"There," he said, "this is yours as soon as the contract is signed."

"English caution!" said the Count. "Well, I shall not have long to wait. Here it is, drawn up in French and English. It only wants signatures and witnesses. You are provided with witnesses?"

"I appointed two gentlemen from a solicitor's office to meet me here at twelve. They are arrived, I know."

"Then we will affix our names at once—you, Monsieur, on the part of the representatives of the *ci-devant* house of Cranstoun and Cranstoun: I on that of my august and imperial Master. We will send for your witnesses at once: two under-secretaries of the Legation will act for mine."

"Pardon me—I should like to run my eye over the contract."

"Oh, by all means," said the Count, carelessly. "By the way, I was forgetting—you remind me that one ought, just as a matter of form, to

examine the stone. You will not object to the examination of an expert? I think it was one of the terms of the treaty."

"By all means," said Mr. Grode in his turn.

"I brought one with me, sworn to secrecy." He threw the parchment over the casket, so as to hide it, and then summoned a porter of the Embassy, a gorgeous being in an embroidered pelisse, a tall fur cap, high boots, and wearing a long sabre, to whom he spoke a few words in an unknown tongue. Then he threw the document over to Mr. Grode, who began to go through it carefully, comparing it, as he read, with a copy of the draft that he had brought with him.

After a minute or two, there entered a tall man of stately and dignified bearing, with a long white beard, and wearing a robe and tall cap such as form the costume of Armenians in Eastern countries.

"Mr. Grode," said the Count, politely, "let me have the honour of introducing to you the excellent Monsieur Michael Gregorius, from Bassora, who knows more about jewels than any man in the world. Michael," he said, turning the key in the lock of the casket, "I am going to test your knowledge. Where is the Great Emerald of Kandahar?"

"All the world knows, your Excellency, that it is in the crown of his Imperial Majesty the Czar of Caspia."

"Then all the world is wrong. Did you ever see it there?"

"Thirty-five years ago I saw it at the coronation of his Imperial Majesty the late Czar."

"And should you know it if you saw it again?"

"Saint Sophia! I should think so. There is not another stone like it in the world. It is the glory of the whole earth."

"Behold it, then," said the Count, taking from the casket, and handing to the expert, a stone to all outward seeming as like poor Nathan's piece of paste as a pea is like a pea. "Where do you think it is now? Michael, you hold in your hands the Great Emerald of Kandahar. It will be a thought for you to rejoice in when you are old."

"Most blessed Sophia!" exclaimed the expert, taking it up tenderly, and gazing into it with reverential eyes. "It is indeed an emerald, if this indeed be the Great Emerald of Kandahar."

"Please to certify to that effect. By our Lady of the Seven Seas, but I have done a good day's work! Why do you not write?" he continued impatiently to the expert, who was absorbed in the stone, as if he could not bear to let it go from his hands.

"Why, it is worth millions of piastres—yes, hundreds of millions. But are you sure, Excellency, that this is the Great Emerald?"

"Sure? Why, what lustre—what depth—what marvellous play of light—what colour——"

"Does your Excellency order me to certify that this is the stone?"

"Why, in the name of the fiend, yes. Why do you ask?"

"Well, then, I will certify."

"Why do you ask?"

"Your Excellency does not order me? He wishes to be satisfied?"

"Of course. Why else did I have you here? Great heaven!" he cried out, with an agonizing presentiment, "do you doubt? Wish to be satisfied, indeed! I should think so! Don't you know that if that is not the real stone, I shall lose my head?"

The expert shook his head sadly. "I am sorry to disappoint your Excellency, but——"

"Well?"

"It is not the stone. It is not a stone at all."

The Count sprang from his seat with a bound. Mr. Grode, who was examining the parchment, and had not understood the foreign language in which this conversation had been carried on, looked up, startled.

"Saints and angels!" cried out the Count to the latter. "Do you hear what he says?"

"I don't understand Caspian. No. What does he say?"

"That you are a *faussaire*, Monsieur Grode; a liar, a swindler." Certainly, Caspian politeness did not seem to extend very far below the skin.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Grode, starting up in his turn.

"He says that you have tried to palm off upon me a false stone; that this is no more an emerald than you are an honest man."

Mr. Grode also grew pale. "Prove it," he said, contemptuously. "And you may tell Mr. Gregorius that he is an ignoramus and a humbug. I'll get a hundred good men as understands stones——"

"Michael Gregorius is never wrong. But you may have your hundred, if you please. I will send for them."

But, for some reason or other, this did not seem to meet Mr. Grode's views.

"No," he said, "one needn't have the affair all over the town. I know something about testing stones myself, and ought to, seeing how long I've been in the trade."

"Have you never tested this?"

"Never. I knew——"

"Then we'll have it tested now. Michael, Mr. Grode says you are a charlatan and a fool."

The solemn face of the Armenian kindled into wrath. "We shall see," he said.

Yes, Mr. Grode's emerald was as false as Nathan Levi's. There is no expressing the Count's rage. First of all he vented it on the expert, throwing the stone at his head, and literally thrusting him from the room. Then he took up a pistol, held it at Mr. Grode's head, and said: "Confess what you have done with the Emerald, or you are a dead man."

It need scarcely be said that Mr. Grode, being a bully, was a coward also; at least, that is in accordance with a very old theory which I, for the most part, have found true. He looked at the door, but the Count saw the look, and placed himself in the road.

"It is no use calling for help," said the latter. "I mean to shoot you. I may as well be hanged in England as beheaded in Caspia. So confess, on your knees, or——"

A click of the pistol completed his sentence eloquently.

"On your knees, *larron!*"

Mr. Grode, trembling all over, fell on his knees.

"Confess!"

"My lord your Excellency, I have nothing to confess. I am deceived as much as you. I am the dupe of the swindler. Good Lord!"

"Then say your prayers."

"I'll tell your highness the whole story. But I can't, if you put the pistol so near. I'm a honest British merchant."

"And I'm a Count of Caspia; and I never found an honest merchant in all my days."

"I'll tell you the story. It was a Jew named Levi——"

"Ah! a Jew!"

"Well, he had the stone. Your Excellency, I offered to buy it off him——"

"Well?"

"He wouldn't sell at no price."

"What did you offer him?"

"A hundred thousand guineas."

"Bah! Pray, are honest British merchants in the habit of offering one piastre for what is worth fifty? And do they expect Jews to take such an offer? Well! So you thought you would copy it? An ingenious idea, truly. What commission did you give the Jew? St. Nicephorus! what rascals!"

"On my oath, I did no such thing. I—borrowed it."

"Borrowed it?"

"I could not disappoint your Excellency."

"What, in the fiend's name, do you mean?" Mr. Grode felt the cold steel of the barrel against his forehead. "You have the real stone, then?"

"That is the only stone I have, on the word of an honest man."

"Do you mean the Jew cheated *you*? That he lent you a piece of paste, instead of the real stone? That may be. But that he lent it you for nothing—no. You must have told him why you wanted it: he must have known that it was he, not you, who ought to be paid."

"It was not his—he had no right to hold it. As I live, it belonged to me—at least to——"

"You are drowning yourself in lies. Where is the Jew?"

"It is true I borrowed it. It was the only way I could get it secretly."

"Where is the Jew?" Again the barrel pressed coldly against the forehead of Mr. Grode.

"I don't know, on the word of a——"

"You do know."

"On my soul, I will tell you all. It's no good going to the Jew. He—didn't know I borrowed it. I knew he had it, or, at least, that damned thing I brought you——"

"So you stole it?"

"I knew where he kept it, and took what wasn't his. Curse him! How should I know that he kept a false stone for a blind?"

"And how did you know where he kept it?"

"He used to look at it at night, and then hide it in the floor."

"How did you know?"

"His room was on the ground-floor, and the window had no curtain. I had happened to be passing by, and——"

The Count put up the pistol. "Monsieur the honest man," he said, with a wintry sort of smile, "I am obliged to you for your candour. You are a thief, that is clear; but it is clear you did not intend to cheat me. That is an accident, and I beg your pardon. A gentleman is bound to apologize, even to a thief, when he is in the wrong. But, by all the saints in the calendar, I swear that, if you do not at once take me to the Jew, I will throw secrecy to the winds, and give you in custody on a charge of housebreaking this very day—*foi de gentilhomme*! There. And, first of all, put on paper what you have told me; and mind—the truth. I am on the track now, and you know best whether or no it will pay you to lie. Or, stay—I will put it down for you." He took pen and paper, and sat down to write, first taking care to lock the door and to give a look to his pistol. "First of all, what is the name of the Jew?"

"Nathan Levi."

"What is he?"

"A broker—a dealer."

"In stones?"

"In all sorts of things."

"How did he get hold of the stone?"

"He bought it at a sale."

"What! the property of my august master sold at a sale?"

"Well, no one knew it was sold. In fact, it had been hidden in the frame of a picture. Levi bought the picture."

"And found the stone?"

"I suppose so."

"And what makes you suppose so?"

"Well, I knew it. You see——"

"Well?"

"You see, old Mr. Cranstoun, who advanced the money on the stone, was a very careful man. He was always thinking things might go wrong, and that the story of the loan might get abroad. You know he had bound himself to secrecy. So, thinking that no one would ever find it but himself, if he hid it in an old picture-frame, he put it there with his own hands, and never told a soul. He tried all he could when on his

death-bed to tell his son ; but no one could make out what he was saying, or else thought he was wandering in his mind. Your Excellency knows that, after he died, no interest was ever paid, so no one could know anything about the matter."

"And how came you to know all this?"

"I happened to know."

"So it seems—but how?"

"I happened to—well, I happened to be by when Mr. Cranstoun put the stone away."

"I see ; and you allowed the sale to proceed ? You never told a word of this to any one ?"

"Your Excellency, I will be open with you."

"If you please." His eye glanced at the pistol.

"It was all out of consideration for his Majesty. I knew how important it was as no one should know. I didn't even tell young Mr. Cranstoun, as is a hare-brained young fool, who'd go prating it all over London. So I did what I could to save the stone by outbidding the Jew. I went up to eighty-five thousand, and then had to let it go."

"Mr. Grode, you're a greater rogue than I took you for. I don't think you were willing to advance eighty-five thousand out of consideration for any one but yourself. The devil take all this secrecy ! I'd better have gone to a lawyer. But the Jew—how did he know ?"

"That, upon my soul, I don't know."

"Well, we'll ask him about that. Meanwhile, we'll follow your story. So you offered him a hundred thousand ?"

"Yes, twenty thousand more than he gave. I couldn't tell him why, of course ; so the offer was a fair one."

"Yes, to you. And he wouldn't part with it ?"

"No."

"So you stole it ?"

Mr. Grode did not answer.

"How did you enter his house ?"

"Through the window of the back room."

"At what hour ?"

"Five in the evening."

"When you knew he would be out—that the premises would be clear ? I may put down that ? Very well. Was it dark ?"

"It wasn't light."

"On what day ?"

Mr. Grode named the very day on which Nathan Levi, on returning home, had found the trap-door suspiciously, though ever so slightly, disturbed. Then, in answer to the Count's questions, he told how he had found the supposed stone that he had brought with him, and how Levi himself was in custody for having attempted to palm off a false stone upon him.

"It seems to me," said the Count, "that this is a case of the biter bit. So old Mr. Cranstoun was a very careful man, you say ?"

"Very careful."

"And very nervous about the stone?"

"Ridiculously nervous."

"Not at all ridiculously. And he knew that you knew?"

"Certainly."

"Caught you peeping, eh?"

"Your Excellency, I——"

"Never peep? Oh, of course not. Anyhow, he knew that you knew."

And do you think he would let the Emerald remain in the frame a moment after he had kicked you out of the room? Imbecile! If the Jew could use an imitation stone for a blind, so could he."

It is scarcely worth while even to allude to Mr. Grode's feelings when this palpable way of accounting for the whole mystery, so far as he was concerned, was so palpably set before him. A gross nature like his feels grossly and without subtleties. But, if he had been in a rage with others before, it may be well imagined in what a rage he was with himself now. He was not much afraid of the Count's threats of prosecution for house-breaking: it had been the pistol in the hands of an angry barbarian that had frightened him into candour. But to feel that he, Peter Grode, the sharp, the prudent, the practical man of business, had been so self-deceived, was grievously hard to bear.

"And now sign this paper," said the Count, "and take me to the Jew. We must get at the bottom of this; though—" He sighed and turned pale. "But, anyhow, I shall not be unavenged. This piece of paper," he said, shaking Mr. Grode's written and signed confession in his face, "will be enough to hang you, if they hang thieves in England. So come; and if you attempt to escape me, I will call a constable. I don't care what happens now; and if I can't get this accursed stone, my august and imperial master and all his concerns may go to the devil."

And so it came to pass that both the rivals found themselves in custody: the one in that of the law, the other in that of Count Andreas Kromeski.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN BOW STREET.

THE Count drew Mr. Grode's arm within his in a friendly manner. But his words were not quite so friendly.

"You are a tall and a big man," he said; "but you have too much flesh to be very active. I am as tall as you are, and I should say about twice as active, and four times as strong. I have also placed my pistol in my right-hand pocket, so as to be ready at an instant's notice; and, as my own life is not worth three weeks' purchase in any case, I don't mind taking yours as well, though in the open street and in the open day. So I advise you to take me at once to this Jew, and to take neither to your

tongue nor to your heels. It is clear that, wherever the stone may be now, the Jew is at the bottom of the affair. So let me have no more delay, or——”

Mr. Grode was of the same opinion—at least, so far as concerned the wisdom of submitting to circumstances. The Count's superior strength was sufficiently proved by the way in which he held his arm, as if in a vice; and he was cowed, besides, and mortified even into feeling himself to be a thief and a cur.

Just then an empty hansom cab happened to be passing, which the Count hailed. “Get in,” he said to Mr. Grode, roughly. “Where to?”

They started off at a good pace, for the Count had taken care to select a cab drawn by a horse something above the average of cab-horses in point of promise, until they arrived at that door in Bow Street, Covent Garden, behind which have been performed so many fragmentary scenes of comedies more complex, and of tragedies more deep, than behind even those of the two great theatres that lie within a stone's-throw of it, and that profess to represent the history of the English stage. The glories of the latter must yield to those of that theatre whose door-keepers are the Metropolitan Police, and whose stage-manager is the magistrate sitting in the small court on the other side of the way.

Beside this door, as if they were play-bills, hung advertisements of lost children, absconding swindlers, and rewards for murder; and two policemen were standing talking to each other idly at the door. To these, Mr. Grode, under the direction of his captor, addressed himself. He had had some intention of asking for their assistance on his own behalf; but the Count never ceased to retain his arm, even in descending from the cab, while the pressure of the pistol-barrel, which he still felt upon his forehead, served as a magic seal to bind his will.

After some little trouble, and a good deal of delay, they were conducted to the cell of Nathan Levi.

“Here you are, sir,” said the policeman who acted as their guide. “I've seen a good many ugly customers, and a good many queer customers, in my day, but this here Jew is the ugliest and the queerest of them all—and that's saying a good deal. He has been wise enough to hold his tongue, though; and it's my belief as the gaoles would have precious little to do if parties would hold their tongues when they're took. He hasn't said a word since he's been in, but just sat down on that bench where you see him now. Levi, here's two gentlemen to see you.”

His two visitors looked towards the bench that formed the whole furniture of the cell in which the prisoner had to wait till next morning. Nathan Levi was sitting upon it, or rather half lying upon it, as, according to the constable, he had sat ever since he had been in custody; but he seemed to have grown deaf as well as dumb.

CHAPTER XXII.

OUT OF BOW STREET—OR ANYWHERE.

How, indeed, should he have been anything else but dumb? Men cry out with pain, but are for the most part silent when they have received a mortal blow.

And what blow can be more mortal than this, that a man should in one moment of time discover that he has, to the utmost of his power, sacrificed himself, body and life and soul, to what he considered absolutely beautiful and absolutely true, and that the object of his sacrifice was all the while a gross and obvious lie, that he might himself have laid bare at any moment had he not been self-deceived. The case is all the stronger when the man is of a coarse and narrow nature which has hitherto caused him to live only for selfish and sordid ends, and when the idol for which he has given up his natural life is the first and only idea of infinite truth and infinite beauty that has ever been borne in upon his soul. Still harder and more terrible still is the blow, when not only is the idol some tangible and visible thing, appealing to the eye and to the touch as well as to the spirit, but is of such a nature as to harmonize the old and sordid life with the life that is new and sublime.

The hosts of glorious spirits, the divine visions, the universal songs that he had supposed to be the work of the jewel fairies of the Great Emerald of Kandahar, had thus proved to be mocking dreams of his own miserable soul over a piece of paste worth eighteenpence. Yes, that eighteenpence was not the most painless part of the sting, and made his soul's tragedy still more terrible by mocking it with farce, covering despair itself with contempt, and shame with ridicule.

What to a lover is his mistress, what to a patriot is his country, what to a martyr is his god—such had this thing been to Nathan Levi. For its sake he had delivered himself up, rejoicing in the sacrifice, to the giants of Poverty and Scorn, and to the commission of that nameless and unnatural sin that consists in a man's denying and casting off that common human nature which gives him the name and the duties of a man. By the possession of what he had deemed to be the very incarnation of wealth, he had been king, high-priest—nay, the universe itself had been his temple and his throne: by the sudden discovery of its worthlessness, he had found himself in the grasp of Mephistopheles, the mocking fiend. The mistress had proved false, the country a fiction, and the god a fetish. From the transport of possession he had passed into the intoxication of worship, and from the intoxication of worship into the very height and depth of love—he had come to hold by the sublime Emerald for its own sublime sake, not for the sake of the wealth that its possession might bring. He would not have parted with it for six million times six million guineas—he would have carried it with him to the stake rather than let it go into other hands. And yet, fool that he had been, he had parted with it for the

sake of a word and smile, only to learn that he had already thrown away all his worship and all his love, even his whole self, upon what was, in truth, far less, far more worthless, than the emptiest dream that ever passed for a moment across a crazy brain. He might, at least, have been left to his self-delusion : but even that baseless support he had cut away with his own hands.

There is a great deal in all this that is comic enough and even ridiculous enough. The idea of a hideous old money-lender who could not open his lips without committing high treason against the English tongue, who was cursed from his cradle with the most unpoetic and contemptible of all the passions—that of greed—who had not a thought or feeling that was not of self alone, bowing down like any slave to romance before a toy because it represented to him the whole beauty of the universe, and then waking to despair because it turned out to be only worth eighteenpence, and finding it no longer beautiful because it was no longer true, is certainly somewhat grotesque for tragedy. But—well, I need not continue : the reader will know as well as I myself what I would say. In real life things are tragic to a man's own self almost exactly in proportion as they are grotesque to others.

He did not take into account his hideousness ; *he* did not think of himself as that stock-subject for sarcasm, a money-lender ; *he* did not know that his bad grammar and his Hebrew accent were food for foolish laughter ; *he* was not ashamed of his greed any more than the profligate is ashamed of his more poetical though equally contemptible passions. *He* did not despise his own instinct of self-love : if he had thought about it at all, he would have considered it as an instinct in which all men shared. *He* did not regard as a mere toy a jewel worth six millions of pounds. And so he could not, as a wise man should do, laugh at the vanity of his dream and let it go. Though but a dream, it had left its effects behind—the terrible effects of a reaction of hopeless remorse.

But, worst of all, the self-evolved spirits whom he had fondly believed to be the immortal genii of truth and of beauty did not, because their secret was discovered, cease their song. They but took their true guise, and in the place of the jewel, fairies stood forth in the shape of mocking imps, fashioned in his own image, to din their chorus into his ears, so that he could see no other sight and hear no other sound. How should he speak to the constables of Bow Street about these things ? While they regarded him as a sullen criminal, he was, in truth, wandering about wildly in that region of hell wherein a man's lost illusions and perished dreams play the part of the Eumenides. And so did his lost illusions and perished dreams scourge him with snakes for thongs, while the accusations of old Judith, more true than she had known, pierced him like arrows, and the face of Felicia looked on him once more, but without a word and without a smile—the face of a messenger of truth, indeed, whose touch had disenchanted the palace of his especial Morgana, but not that of a messenger of mercy any more.

We have led thee from earthly places,
 We have borne thee to heights afar :
 We have taught thee what the grace is
 Of sun, and moon, and star :
 We have brought thee before the faces
 Of impossible things that are.

We have given to thy sight the seeing
 Of more than the soul may see :
 We have given to thy life the being
 Of more than a man may be :
 We have given to thy hands the freeing
 Of life from mortality.

We have lured thee unto a heaven
 Than heaven itself more fair :
 Unto thee have we given
 The kingdoms of the air,
 And all the planets seven,
 And the round world everywhere.

We have throned thee on hills Elysian,
 And o'er gods have crown'd thee :
 We have fed thee with the vision
 Of more than may ever be :
 We have mocked thee with derision,
 And hurled thee into the sea !

I do not, of course, mean to say that Nathan Levi heard these very words in his ears. But something to their effect he did hear, and a great deal more besides. And even as one dominant note had run through the whole music of his transcendent dreams and blent them all into one harmony, so now through the terrible music of his waking ran the same one note—the same, only changed into bitterness—

We have mocked thee with derision,
 And hurled thee into the sea !

No wonder, then, that the constable had doubted the perfect sanity of his prisoner; though it by no means follows that a man is mad because he hears and sees what other men may not hear or see. So absorbed was he in his self-contempt and in the disappointment of his soul that he neither saw nor heard the entrance of his visitors. The Count had, in his impatience, to shake him by the shoulders before he could be roused to consciousness. Even then he was only roused into torpor.

But this rough recall to life, acting upon a frame worn out by bodily privation and by the long weight of dreams too large and too heavy for a soul like his to bear, had the effect of an over-strong blast of air upon a lingering spark of flame that leaps under it into sudden life only the next moment to be extinguished for ever.

"Levi," began the Count; but a sudden change in the Jew's face arrested him.

"*Shema Israel!*" said the latter, slowly, beginning the proper

ejaculation of a pious and orthodox Jew when he sees the end of all things.

"*Shema Israel!* The shtone ish a good shtone."

He was not addressing the Count, though the latter thought so.

"Where is it, then? By Saint Nicephorus——"

"And I shee 'im now."

And so he turned himself over upon the bench, with his face to the wall, and died, simply and literally of a broken heart. How should he not die, when the Great Emerald of Kandahar was false, and yet there was nothing in the whole universe but the Great Emerald of Kandahar?

CHAPTER XXIII.

PEARL AND EMERALD.

AND here, were it in any way lawful, I would bring this broken and fragmentary history to a fitting close. I do not pretend to be able to carry the story of Nathan Levi farther than this; and, though I chose to elevate Count Andreas Kromesky to temporary rank, yet it was the old-clothesman who, after all, was certainly my true hero. But—unwillingly as I must needs admit the fact—it is out of my province to speculate whether or no the one piece of self-sacrifice that indirectly caused his death—for, be it remembered, if he had sacrificed all that was true and real to what was inherently and essentially false, he had, at length, sacrificed the false in its turn to something, some one feeling, that was essentially and inherently true—whether this one piece of self-sacrifice, I say, was sufficiently great and pure to compensate for all errors, and to admit him to prove after death (which, according to the Rabbis, redeems from all evil), that to have once loved something for its own sake, though it be but a piece of green glass, and to have sacrificed what he loved, was not, after all, to have lived altogether in vain. I wish, for my part, to think that this miserable piece of man—who had somehow managed to crawl or struggle even so far upward as, though through no merit of his own and though but in fancy, just to touch the outer hem of the garment of beauty, and to achieve, though but in intention, a harder piece of self-sacrifice than even so many as a few are capable of achieving; who, though from mixed motives enough, had brought himself to give up what, to him, was more than life for the sake of one who could never be anything to him but a passing smile—was somehow, after all, a gainer, although in fact his dreams were but illusions and his sacrifice barren of result. But, as I have said, all this is beyond my province; and on this matter, therefore, every one must think as he will or can. Certainly, the transformation that should develop a winged soul out of such a chrysalis as the body of Nathan Levi must be great indeed; but then, on the other hand, what is impossible?

But it is not beyond my province to deal with those who were still living. I wish it were. It is, unfortunately, anything but difficult to

speculate as to what will happen when two unpractical people marry for love, live extravagantly, and then take to indulging in expensive illnesses. The morning after her midnight visitation, Felicia awoke—no, not awoke, for to awake one must have slept, and she had not slept—but emerged apprehensively from her fortress to find that the ghosts had departed, only to leave behind them the presence of what, under the circumstances, was worse than a legion of ghosts—that is to say, nothing. The day had come at last when the cupboard was left so bare that even Poverty herself had to make way for the shadow of a more terrible tenant still. It makes one angry to have to speak so often of bodily starvation as if it were the greatest of all human ills; but so long as men and women have bodies more conspicuously and more imperatively than souls, so it must be; and perhaps it had been this hideous demon who had entered under the appropriate guise of Nathan Levi.

Arthur was sound asleep when she pulled away her barricade, and, not knowing what would be revealed to her eyes, gathered her unfinished work together, and crept on tiptoe into the naked sitting-room, through whose uncurtained and blankly staring window the dull light of a cold and rainy morning was finding its way. It was indeed fortunate, she felt, that He was sleeping and unconscious; it would be well if he could remain so during, at least, the first of their foodless days. It is almost strange that she did not feel that it would be better still if he, or she, or both, could remain sleeping and unconscious for ever. But even now, though, according to all right, she ought to have despaired, she did not sit down in despair. Not *dum spero*, but *dum amo, vivo*—Love will cling to bare life, even when hope is gone. She finished her work, though her swollen eyes ached and throbbed and her head felt as though it were on the point of bursting in pieces; and then, when it was finished, set out to carry it to Madame Cornet, who gave her, not money—for, indeed, the debt, by reason of advances, lay the other way—but a cup of coffee and a slice of bread as her share of the household breakfast. The former she took, simply because, from its nature, she could not carry it away; the latter she secretly slipped into her pocket. Then she returned, and found Arthur awake. He had passed through the crisis of the fever, and was calm and conscious, though as weak as a child.

Then, for the first time during many months, she burst into tears—yes, into tears of joy! She welcomed him back to starvation as though to a kingdom.

He was too weak to talk much himself, but not too weak to listen: indeed, for that matter, he insisted on hearing from her lips on the spot the whole endless story of how he had been ill, and he refused to let himself rest until she had pacified him by letting him hear it all. Of the part that she had played, of her own toil and of her own privations, he was left to a great extent uninformed: not so much because she consciously tried to conceal from him what she had borne for him as because, in her absurd joy and relief, she had honestly forgotten all her own sufferings.

But he could not help seeing how changed she was, and ascribed the change to its true cause, which, in his eyes, rendered her only a thousand times more beautiful than she had been before. And so, in truth, she was, though not to common or unsympathetic eyes. In spite of romance, no woman, not even a heroine, can pass through many weeks of extreme and wearing toil, fearful anxiety, want of natural rest, hunger, sleepless watching and tearless grief, and yet retain the beauty that belongs to health and youth and happiness. But Felicia's beauty, never so very wonderful even at the best of times, had always been of the spiritual sort rather than of the material : and it is notorious that the spiritual sort of beauty not seldom finds food in that wherein material beauty finds poison. To eyes like those of her father she would seem to have grown old and plain, her eyes to have lost their brightness, her tints their purity, and her outlines their grace : but to those of Arthur her beauty had become transformed from that of a girl into that of an angel of helping and suffering. It may be remembered that he had always been a cultivator of the ideals of those early Christian painters who seemed to regard the attributes of earthly beauty as sullyng their conceptions of saints and angels. And now the Pearl of pearls, which he, through love, had always known to be lying in the deep sea of her heart, had, by unseen hands, been brought up from its depths and displayed openly to the light of day. Once it had been content to let glimpses of its light shine through her opal eyes : now it had come to reveal itself so clearly in every deed and word that it mattered no more whether her eyes were bright or clouded, blue or hazel, black or grey, so long as they were Her eyes still.

Then he slept again, while she, with a thankful heart, resumed her eternal needle by his bedside. Then—for his was even an exceptionally elastic nature—he awoke with the first touch of a convalescent's hunger. And she had nothing to give him but the slice of bread that she had saved from her breakfast—a sorry substitute for the food that convalescents are supposed to need.

She gave it to him, with, by way of grace, a mental prayer to the Lord of the birds of the air. He tried to eat, but, after swallowing a mouthful, gave up the attempt. Then he began to think about his pictures.

"I am afraid I must give it up at last," he said, with a heavy sigh. "I shall never be able to get them back now."

"Get them back?"

"Yes—where are they then? Not gone with the other things?"

For answer, she opened the door, so that he could see from his bed his "Holy Family" standing as it had stood when he had fallen before it on the floor.

It was a blessed sight to him, for the subject is not one that requires to be treated by a Raphael or a Murillo to tell its story to one who believes. His painter endeavoured to raise himself upon his bed, and then fell back upon the arm of his own Lady of Sorrows and of Joys.

"You have not parted with the pictures, then?"

"Of course not!"

He looked at her with wondering admiration, and then at the dry crust. He guessed how she herself must have fared if this was all she had to give to him.

"Well," he said, "I will not part with the 'Holy Family' just yet. Something may come of it—especially if I paint in an entirely new Madonna. But the others may go and welcome—the 'Chaos,' and the 'Saint Laurence,' and the 'Plague of Darkness.' If the 'Madonna' turns out to be worth anything I can get them back again; if not—well, at all events, we shall not have starved for another three days. We will begin with 'Chaos.'"

And so "Chaos" found its way to the pawnbroker's.

On the third day "Saint Laurence" followed its example.

It was the turn of the "Plague of Darkness" on the fifth day, by which time Arthur was on a fair way towards recovery, and was getting stronger on the proceeds of the advances of his first and only art-patron. Alas, Felicia, the born lady, had long lost every feeling of shame in visiting a place of business that is popularly supposed to be known to ladies only by name. All that she cared about now was having so little to carry there; and she would have been ashamed of being ashamed.

Nor did she care who might see her on the way. Her friends and acquaintances were things of the past, and she would not even have taken notice if she had been seen going on what is—absurdly enough—generally regarded as being in itself a degrading errand. But on this occasion, while approaching her pawnbroker's door with the "Plague of Darkness" under her arm, she could not avoid taking notice of a somewhat strange and *outré* figure, at least to English eyes, standing with his long nose and beard pressed close against the window. He was dressed in a semi-Oriental style, not often, though sometimes met with in out-of-the-way London streets, especially in that Soho region which is so full of outlandish costumes and of outlandish people in them. The dress in question was a long black caftan, trimmed with sable, and a high square cap of the same colour.

She did not, however, delay to join three small boys in staring, but walked into her usual cell.

It was not a house of large business, except perhaps on Saturdays and Mondays: and as she made a point of avoiding these days, she was generally attended to quickly. But to-day she was kept a long time, while a conversation was carried on in a low tone between the shopman and a customer in the cell adjoining hers; and when she was attended to it was to be asked to be good enough to step for a few moments into an inner room.

She timidly obeyed, and waited there alone for some minutes. But nothing happened. She was merely brought back into the shop, her business was concluded, and she was dismissed with a few shillings in her pocket instead of the "Plague of Darkness" under her arm. As she passed

out, however, the Oriental dress was still at the entrance, and its wearer stared at her so long and so hard that she had to cast down her eyes and walk away in as great a hurry as she could.

Well, these were now really the last shillings, unless the gigantic Madonna was to go the road of "Chaos:" and that was so large that, like the portraits of the Primrose family, it was doubtful if it could be carried through the door. That evening she and her husband had to take thought for the morrow indeed. One cannot always, whatever one's faith in an unknown future may be, be content with the day's evil, even though it be more than sufficient.

Arthur, half-lying on the bed, with the pillows arranged as much as possible in the fashion of an arm-chair, and Felicia, sitting on the empty trunk by his side, were consulting with each other as to what could be done till the former should be well enough to look for work of any kind—for even he had lost faith in his genius now—when heavy, tramping, measured footsteps were heard ascending the stairs. Then, after the merest apology for a rap, the door slowly opened, and in the darkness were seen at the threshold the forms of two men.

"Who is there?" called out Felicia quickly.

Some deep whispering was heard. Then a strange voice growled, "Show a light, please. I'm a constable, and I want to see Mrs. Snow."

"Mrs. Snow?" began Arthur: but before another word could be said on either side, Felicia hurried into the sitting-room and closed the bedroom door. Some new presentiment of final evil fell upon her, though she could not tell of what or why.

"You wish to see me?" she asked.

"Yes—if you'll let me. You're rather dark in here. I'm a detective of the Metropolitan Police, and this here's a fellow-constable. P'raps you know what job we're come about? Any way," he added, by way of a joke, "you seem keeping us pretty well in the dark just now."

She struck a light, and saw before her the speaker, another constable in uniform, the shopman with whom she had been in the habit of dealing at the pawnbroker's, a tall man, apparently a foreigner, and, of all people in the world, the man in the caftan and tall cap whom she had seen in the morning.

"That's the lady," said the shopman, "sure enough." The man in the caftan also nodded his head solemnly.

"You are charged," said the detective, "with larceny of a hemerald as you pledged with Mr. Jonas, pawnbroker, or of having received the same, well knowing it to be stole, and I shall take you in custody on that charge, unless you give a satisfactory account of how it came in your possession; but I must caution you that whatever you say, it 'll be took down and used against you on your trile; and now you may say what you please."

She clasped her hands together, half in wonder and half in despair.

"Oh, don't speak so loud, please," she exclaimed in a whisper. "My husband is in the next room, and is still very ill."

"A husband, eh?" said the detective. "I fancy we shall have to see after him too. Have you anything to say? Or will you come along quiet with me?"

"What do you mean? What do you want me to say? I know nothing of any emerald, except——"

The detective pulled out a pocket-book, and opened it.

"Mind," he said, "I've cautioned you, and what you say 'll be took down and used as evidence on your trile."

"I certainly did pledge a brooch with Mr. Jonas; it might have been emerald. But my husband gave it me before we were married—and he had had it I don't know how long."

"That's the harticle," replied the detective. "P'r'aps we'd better see your husband?"

"But he is ill. He has just had a dangerous fever. Indeed, I have told you all we know."

"But p'r'aps he may be able to tell us a little more. I daresay he isn't too ill to put himself clear."

"You suspect my husband of being a thief?" cried out Felicia, firing up with indignation.

"That's as may be. Any way, this here brooch ain't his; leastways it's been claimed and identified by this gentleman here," said the officer, pointing to the stranger without the caftan. "And there's plenty of other things, ear-rings and such like, as may or mayn't be his neither. He ain't in no danger if he come by them honestly."

"You shall not come here to insult him—perhaps to kill him. He a thief!"

"You don't deny you pledged this here brooch with Mr. Jonas, in the name of Mrs. Snow?"

"And why not, when it was my own?"

"Felicia!" called out Arthur from within. She opened the door.

"Arthur," she said, resolutely, "these men have come to charge you with stealing the brooch with the green stone you gave me. What they mean, I don't know. Tell them it is your own, and send them away."

"What is the meaning of all this?" asked Arthur. "There must be some strange mistake. Who are you?"

"I'm a detective," answered the officer, advancing. "This is a constable; this gentleman is assistant to Mr. Jonas, pawnbroker; this is Count Kro—meski; and this is Mossioo Gregorius."

"Count Kromeski? Monsieur Gregorius? Who the devil——And what have my wife's trinkets to do with them?"

"I shall caution you, as I did Mrs. Snow. Whatever you say it 'll be took down and used——"

"Mrs. Snow? And who's Mrs. Snow?"

The detective winked at the constable, who showed intelligence stolidly. Felicia stood blushing and hanging down her head with shame.

"Forgive me, Arthur!" she said. "I was obliged to part even with your presents for a time. Better to part with them than with you! And I could not pawn them in *your* name."

"Forgive you!" said her husband, as he took her hand, and kissed it. "You hear," he said to the detective. "But before I say another word, by whom am I charged? By Count Kromeski, of whom I never heard in my life before?"

"By me, Count Andreas Kromeski," said the latter, speaking for the first time, and pushing the detective aside—"by me, acting for my august master, Czar of Caspia and owner of this jewel. Ah, Michael Gregorius is the prince of experts! Who would have thought of his spying out this priceless jewel in the window of a pawn-shop in Soho?"

"I must be delirious again," said Arthur. "My wife's brooch a priceless jewel belonging to the Czar of Caspia?"

"I am never deceived when I see a gentleman," said the Count; "and you are or have been one; though indeed——," and he looked round the naked room. "Yes; however you came by the brooch, the matter is now in the hands of the law. Would to Saint Demetrius that I had applied to the law sooner! It is in the hands of Mr. Wells."

"Mr. Wells the solicitor?"

"The same."

"My solicitor—Mr. Wells of Lincoln's Inn?"

"Your solicitor?"

"Why not? Send for him immediately. There seems to be some extraordinary mystery."

"He will know you?"

"I should think so."

"That is unfortunate. He happens to be out of town."

"That is certainly unfortunate. Will he be away for long?"

"For a day or two."

"Well, you will see, when he returns. But do you mean to say that Mr. Wells has advised you to make a charge of theft against *me*? And why do you go to him? He does not practise in criminal matters—he is not in the habit of taking cases of this sort."

"Why? That is a long story. But—as you are found dealing with this jewel, you may understand when I tell you that it is because he was the solicitor employed by the late house of Cranstoun and Cranstoun."

"I must be raving!" exclaimed Arthur.

"Who are you, then?" asked the Count. "Your name is not Snow?"

The detective opened his pocket-book and took out his pencil.

"Did you not hear what my wife said? Do you mean to say that

when you come to arrest me you do not know that my name is Arthur Cranstoun ? ”

The Count looked as though he would have fallen to the ground.

“ O Saint Demetrius ! O Saint Sophia ! ” he cried out. “ You are Arthur Cranstoun ? ”

“ And now, perhaps, you will tell me who *you* are, and what this means.”

But, instead of answering, the Count laid down the brooch on the table. “ Let none speak a word,” he said imperiously. “ We are on the trail now, and may I lose my head in good earnest if we lose it again. You need not be afraid, Madam,” he said to Felicia, with a low bow. “ Better days are doubtless in store for you ; and I trust you will pardon me if I have put you to any needless inconvenience. But wait—I must not let myself be baulked now. We must prove your identity, sir, though I myself do not doubt it. Whom do you know in London ? ”

Arthur considered. “ Mr. Wells would have done best,” he answered ; “ but, as he is away—well, there is my father-in-law, Mr. Grode. We are not on good terms, it is true ; but he will not object to say that I am myself.”

“ What—Mr. Grode ? ” cried out the Count, eagerly. “ Do you say Mr. Grode ? And you are not on terms ? Was it about this stone ? ”

“ About this brooch ? No—but it was about a stone—ah, I begin to see—for God’s sake, send at once for Mr. Grode ! ”

In spite of the Count’s professed desire for silence, it was impossible to avoid, under such circumstances, entering upon mutual explanations for the satisfaction of mutual curiosity ; and these resulted in the Count’s surprising Felicia by bending over her hand as if it had been that of his own Czarina. She had done nothing but suffer : and yet she seemed to have grown into a heroine.

Meanwhile, as all the world knows, it is not far from Newman Street to Russell Square : and it did not take more than half-an-hour for a diplomatic message, carefully concocted by the Count and shown to no one, to summon Mr. Grode. He was shown up into Arthur’s room, where he found himself in the strange company of his daughter, his son-in-law, two policemen, the Count, the expert, and the shopman, all grouped round an empty box, on the lid of which lay the brooch which had formerly, when worn by his daughter, so much excited his contempt and indignation. He stood in vacant surprise.

“ Mr. Grode,” said the Count, “ you are a great rascal, but your daughter is an angel. For her sake I will take no proceedings against you, as you well know I might if I pleased. You shall be punished by being asked a question and hearing its answer. What is this ? ” he asked, pointing to the brooch.

“ An old brooch that Cranstoun gave my daughter,” he said, “ and ugly enough it is in all conscience.”

"Michael," then asked the Count again, turning to the expert, "what is that old brooch that is ugly enough in all the conscience of Mr. Grode?"

"That," said the expert, bowing his head reverently before the brooch as he spoke—"that is the Great Emerald of Kandahar."

EPILOGUE.

INSTANTLY a flood of emerald light filled the room. Whether it was the glorified smile of the real jewel-fairies at last, or whether it flowed from the idea of the six million pounds, who shall say? But, in either case, the green stone itself, without being transformed, became glorified. Even so does that which is despised when thought to be worth eighteenpence become the acknowledged light of the world when known to be worth six million pounds: and even so does that which is held to be the light of the world become mere empty rubbish when proved to be worth but eighteenpence.

But I myself, if I may speak of myself yet once more, am by no means satisfied with this rough and ready way of accounting for the unaccountable. I have something more than a mere dim suspicion that these same jewel-fairies of whom I have so often made mention are capricious beings whose delight it is to blend the false inextricably with the true. I am by no means sure that the stone that Nathan Levi worshipped was always the false stone, or that the brooch worn by Felicia was in fulness the Great Emerald until its wearer had proved herself in the furnace of unheroic suffering and in that sordid sort of martyrdom that, giving no scope for heroic action, is the hardest martyrdom of all, to be a pearl above rubies. No doubt many will be amply content with the matter-of-fact way of accounting for all things suggested, with ingenuity and probability, by Count Andreas Kromeski. But, be that as it may, that Mr. Grode, Nathan Levi, and Arthur Cranstoun were three men of Gotham, has been amply proved, in so far as they looked both high and low for what they had but to put out their hands to find: and, for the rest, I cannot help calling to mind some old-fashioned stanzas about the jewel-fairies themselves, that, whatever their merits may be, seem as familiar to me as if they were my own—as, indeed, perhaps they are—and which are as follows:—

We seek the sands of sunless waters :
 We wander through the sun-lit air :
 We shed for all Earth's sons and daught'ers
 Our blightless blossoms everywhere.

'Tis ours within its living chamber
 To breed the jewel of the brine :
 'Tis we that spread the shore with amber,
 And weave the wealth that lights the mine.

And e'en as Nature's truth doth treasure
Within each heaving breast of hers
Some jewel for a heart, to measure
The pulse-strokes of her universe :

Even as each stroke beneath its motion
Some precious thing must needs enfold—
Its gems the Earth, its pearls the Ocean,
The Flame its dragon-guarded gold :

So human hearts, that from her fountains
Of life she fills with life, must share
The mysteries of meres and mountains,
The secret gifts of flame and air.

So to each living soul we enter :
O'er each we breathe our speechless spell,
And seal upon its secret centre
The macrocosmic pentacle.

Some as the gold-souled fire are chainless :
Some, hard as hills that hide the gem :
Some as the stainless sea are stainless,
And pearls for hearts we give to them.

And one we have, one gem supremest,
That, shewn to all, may fall to few :
'Tis when thou hopest, lovest, dreamest
That thou dost find the path thereto.

The sky's glad gold, the ocean's whiteness,
The green-robed earth by morn impearled,
Charge with an iridescent brightness
Our opal mirror of the world :

And when, from rocks by storm-waves rended,
Some purer soul to sight is called,
Then in that gem supremely blended,
Are Gold, and Pearl, and Emerald.
